Marlborough

and

The Rise of the British Army

By

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With Illustrations and Maps

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PREFACE

THIS attempt to tell the story of the life and campaigns of the Duke of Marlborough has, like more important things, suffered from the war. It was well on its way to completion in the Long Vacation of 1914 when a summons to duty at the War Office laid it aside and incidentally stopped a projected visit to Bavaria to study the battle-fields of Blenheim and the Schellenberg on the spot. Between August 4, 1914, and my demobilization in the summer of 1919 only scanty opportunities of continuing the attempt presented themselves in the shape of short periods of leave, and the book has had to contend against the broken character of the time available for its compilation.

My main object has been to deal with Marlborough as a soldier, as the first man under whom the British Army won important victories and achieved great things on the Continent of Europe. If Marlborough is entitled to a great place among Englishmen it is on his record as a soldier that his claim is based, it is his military achievements which entitle him to the gratitude and respect of his countrymen and may be set off against his intrigues with the monarch he had helped to dethrone. Moreover, of late years a good deal of evidence has become available in the publications of the Historical Manuscripts Commission and elsewhere which throws new light on some of his chief actions and has not as yet, as far as I am aware, been utilized for the purpose. The usual version of the doings of the British infantry at Ramillies, for example, cannot be

maintained in face of the letters of Colonel Cranstoun of the Cameronians published in the Portland MSS. (Historical Manuscripts Commission) or those from Lord Orkney printed by Mr. H. H. Craster in the *English Historical Review* for 1904 which give a quite new version of the part played by Marlborough's right in that battle. I believe I am the first person to connect the new evidence contained in these sources, neither of which was available when Mr. Fortescue published the first volume of his *History of the British Army*, the authority to which one naturally turns for the description of Marlborough's campaigns.

My main concern being with Marlborough's military career I have attempted to sketch the state which the development of the art of war had attained at the period when he received his first commission and I have also devoted some space to his service under Turenne on account of the great importance of that episode in his military education and development, though I fear that the information available is so scanty that it is impossible to attain complete certainty on this subject. The political history of the period, more particularly that of the reign of Anne, I have endeavoured to treat solely from the point of view of its effect on Marlborough's career and of his personal share in the different negotiations and crises, it being clearly impossible in a biography of this nature to deal fully with important events many of which concerned him indirectly rather than directly.

In preparing diagrams to illustrate the principal actions I have attempted to show roughly the ground on which the actions were fought, the localities at which

the principal incidents took place, and the general lines occupied: I have not attempted to show in detail the dispositions of the troops, because, unless these are shown not only at the beginning of each battle but at subsequent stages, thus necessitating several plans for the same battle, the attempt to show the dispositions can be little more than conventional.

In the matter of spelling I have endeavoured to use the most familiar forms, possibly at the expense of strict accuracy, but "Blenheim" has the sanction of tradition and might not be universally recognized as "Blindheim." Occasionally when quoting from contemporary authorities I have left the form used by them, even where it differs from that which I have myself employed: thus Auverquerque, the Dutch general, is called Overkerque by Cranstoun and Orkney; "Hogstet" (*i. e.* Hochstedt) for "Blenheim" rather recalls "B. E. F. 1914–1918" pronunciations of foreign languages.

I wish in conclusion to express my thanks to the Editor of this series, Mr. H. W. C. Davis, for valuable criticisms and suggestions, and to the Earl Spencer, K. G., for kindly permitting the reproduction of the portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough from the Althorp collection. These have not previously been reproduced and Earl Spencer informs me that the portrait of the Duke is reported by tradition to have been that which the Duchess specially preferred.

C. T. A.

OXFORD, March, 1921.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I HAVE as far as possible based this account on contemporary or nearly contemporary authorities, and though I am glad to confess my indebtedness to many modern works, notably Coxe's *Life of Marlborough*, Mr. Fortescue's *History of the British Army*, Lord Wolseley's two volumes on Marlborough, and Colonel Clifford Walton's *History of the Standing Army*, I have, whenever possible, checked their information by reference to their sources when accessible.

For the biography of Marlborough the main sources must be the five volumes of his Dispatches, edited by Sir George Murray and published in 1845,[1] together with the copious extracts from the Blenheim Papers contained in Coxe's Life which make the Archdeacon's three volumes an indispensable supplement to the Dispatches. References to letters written by and received by Marlborough, not otherwise identified, are to letters quoted by Coxe. The information to be found in these sources has of course long been available and has formed the basis for every work on Marlborough. Within more recent years it has been possible to supplement it considerably from the volumes of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, which contain much information not yet used for the biography of Marlborough. Lord Wolseley utilized such Reports as had been issued when he wrote but many additional volumes have been issued since then. The Portland MSS. contain a mass of original information of the utmost value, more espe-

[1] Quoted as "Disp."

cially the letters of Colonel Cranstoun, of which mention has already been made, which throw a flood of light on the campaigns of 1705–1709. Next in importance come the Hare MSS. which possess the special interest of giving the point of view of the Duke's own headquarters. The Bath MSS., the Checquers Court MSS., the Cowper MSS., the Egmont MSS., and the great collection of Stuart MSS. at Windsor Castle deserve mention as among the volumes in the series of which I have made most extensive use. Many other collections provide valuable information in less quantity and references such as "Stopford Sackville MSS." or "Northumberland MSS." apply to volumes of the Historical Manuscripts Commission.

In addition to the volumes in this series there are several collections of contemporary letters and papers which may be classed with them; among these the Hatton Correspondence printed by the Camden Society, Lord Ailesbury; Memoirs (published in 1891 by the Roxburghe Club) the Papers relating to the Scots Brigade in the Dutch service published by the Scottish Historical Society; and the Annals and Correspondence of the first and second Earls of Stair (published in 1875), contain much useful information. Lord Orkney's letters (*cf.* p. ii.) belong to the same category and possess exceptional value.

Another group of sources comprises the volumes of the Calendar of State Papres, Domestic, and of Treasury Books and Papers, though there is a gap in the former series between 1680 and 1689 and the series does not extend beyond 1705. Fortunately for inquirers into Marlborough's career the State Papers

not yet calendared have been laid under contribution by Mr. Charles Dalton for his quite invaluable six volumes of *Army Lists and Commission Registers*, by Colonel Clifford Walton, and by the Hon. J. W. Fortescue, my indebtedness to whose researches will be obvious. I have supplemented these by consulting the originals to a certain extent and have in particular devoted a good deal of time to exploring the State Papers, Foreign, in the hope of obtaining accurate information on the obscurest portion of Marlborough's career, his service with the French army in the years 1672–1677.

A fourth class of authorities consists of memoirs and diaries written by men who took part in the Duke's campaigns. There are unfortunately but few of these, nothing like the vast mass of literature of this sort to which the Peninsular War gave birth.[1] Moreover, three of the few soldier diarists of Marlborough's day were somewhat unluckily from the same regiment, the 18th Royal Irish, and two of these, Captain Robert Parker (*Memoirs of the most remarkable Military Transactions from 1683–1718*, 1st edition 1746) and General Richard Kane (*Campaigns of King William and the Duke of Marlborough*, 1st edition 1745), resemble each other so closely, even verbally, that I am inclined to think that they cannot be regarded as quite independent authorities. The third of the diarists from the 18th Royal Irish is Sergeant John Millner, whose *Compendious Journal of all the Marches, famous Battles and Sieges of the Confederate Allies in their late war* was first issued in 1733. Millner's narrative has much less

[1] *Cf.* Oman's *Wellington's Army*, chapter ii.

literary merit than those of Kane and Parker and is somewhat bald and matter-of-fact in style, but it gives many valuable statistics and is an accurate and useful chronicle. Private John Deane of the Grenadier Guards has left a short account of the campaign of 1708 which is interesting and curious and contributes a certain amount to our knowledge of the brief period which he covers. The remaining British diarist, Colonel John Blackader of the Cameronians, was more concerned with the state of his soul than with the doings of the army in general, or even of his own regiment in particular; he is too much absorbed in spiritual warfare to afford more than occasional light on battles and campaigns but his *Memoirs*, published in 1844, are not to be neglected. With this group may be included the memoirs of the Frenchman who served through most of the war under the Elector of Bavaria, De la Colonie. A translation of his account has been published under the title of *Chronicles of the Old Campaigner* and is valuable as giving the story of the Schellenberg, of the 1705 campaign, and of Ramillies from the enemy's point of view. The *Memoirs* of Villars (volumes 69 and 70 in the Petitot collection of memoirs for the history of France) are of course very valuable, despite the boastful and not always accurate version he gives of various incidents; those of Berwick (volumes 65 and 66 in same collection) are also of value and I have used these sources extensively as also those of Torcy in the same collection for the negotiations of 1709–1711. The collection of *Mémoires militaires relatifs à la Succession d' Espagne*, edited by General Pelet in the *Documents inèdits pour servir à l' histoire de la France* (1835), are in

their way as indispensable as Coxe and the Marlborough Dispatches but unfortunately they do not cover the whole period. Luckily for the campaign of 1709 they are supplemented by the collection of documents relating to the battle of Malplaquet published by the Historical Section of the French General Staff in 1904 and admirably edited by M. Sautai, a mine of information for that year's doings.

Another group of sources comprises the numerous contemporary or nearly contemporary biographies and narratives of the wars. Of these Lediard's Life, published in 1736, deserves most consideration as Lediard appears to have been attached to the Duke's staff in a secretarial capacity and was present in several of his campaigns. De Quincy's *Histoire militaire du régne de Louis le Grand* (1726) gives the French version, while *The Military History of Eugene and Marlborough*, published in 1736 with plans and plates engraved by Claude du Bosc (referred to as *Mil. Hist.*), represents a reproduction by John Campbell of two other French works, *Batailles gagnées . . . par le Prince Eugène*, by J. Dumont (1725), and Rousset's *Histoire militaire du Prince Eugène, du Prince et Duc de Marlborough et du Prince de Nassau Frise* (1729). The *Lives of Two Illustrious Generals*, published in 1713, and Thomas Brodrick's *Compleat History of the Late War in the Netherlands*, also of 1713, may be included in this group, together with the accounts of Turenne's campaigns written by the Abbé Raguenet and by Chevalier Ramsay.

The numerous pamphlets and all the other literature, of which Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*, the counterblast

on *The Management of the Late War*, and the Duchess of Marlborough's own *Account of her Conduct* are the most conspicuous examples, afford but little trustworthy evidence for the side of Marlborough's career on which I have concentrated my attention and I have not made any extensive use of these sources.

Of more modern works I have found Lord Wolseley's two volumes of considerable assistance, though to be used with some caution, especially for the period before the Revolution. It is much to be regretted that Lord Wolseley never carried on the work, as it is a real deprivation not to have his account of the Spanish Succession War. Dr. J. S. Reid's *John and Sarah, Duke and Duchess of Marlborough*, I have also read with profit, if not able to accept its conclusions unreservedly. Of Mr. Fortescue's *History of the British Army* I have already spoken and my indebtedness to Sir Julian Corbett's *England in the Mediterranean* will also be obvious. From the works of the late General Colin,[1] whose death on the Macedonian front in 1917 was the most serious loss military history has suffered since Colonel G. F. R. Henderson's death, I have derived much assistance, more particularly in my first and last chapters, for which I have also found Colonel E. M. Lloyd's *History of Infantry* helpful and suggestive. Of German works von Arndt's *Prinz Eugen* is largely concerned with the operations in which Marlborough and Eugene cooperated while I have found Erdmannsdorffer's *Deutsche Geschichte, 1645–1740*, helpful for some of the minor operations in Germany.

[1] *La Tactique de l'Infanterie au XVIIIe Siècle* (1907), and *Les Transformations de la Guerre* (1912).

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The Rise of the British Army

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

MARLBOROUGH IN HISTORY—THE ART OF WAR IN MARLBOROUGH'S DAY: HIS PREDECESSORS—STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY—MARLBOROUGH AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BRITISH ARMY.

"*The battle of Salamanca is the most skilful, the most considerable in regard to the number of troops engaged, the most important in its results which the English have gained in these recent times. It classes Lord Wellington almost on the level of Marlborough. One has had reason up till now to recognize his prudence, his skill in choosing positions, his power of profiting by them; at Salamanca he has shown himself great and accomplished in manœuvring: he kept his dispositions concealed almost all day long, he waited for our movements before showing his own: he has played his game with all his men concentrated: he has fought in oblique order: it was a battle in the style of Frederick.*"

Vie Militaire du Général Foy, Girod de l'Ain, p 178.

WITH such a tribute to the military capacities of the Duke of Marlborough his warmest admirers may well rest content. That a critic as candid and as acute as Foy,

one of the ablest French officers employed in the Peninsula, could find no higher praise for the victor in a battle he admits to be "the catastrophe of the Spanish war" shows how highly Marlborough's talents were rated by the descendants of his opponents. Foy's appreciation of Wellington is frank and ungrudging. Salamanca was no "soldiers' battle"; the victory was the fruit of a generalship of a high order. Moreover in referring to Marlborough it is at least probable that Foy was not speaking at random, not merely citing him as typical of great soldiers of the past, as he might have cited Hannibal or Gustavus, but that his comparison was deliberate. Napoleon himself had paid special attention to Marlborough's campaigns and had caused a life of him to be written.[1] Foy may well have read this biography, but it is no light compliment which he pays to the victor of Blenheim and of Ramillies when even a victory as brilliant, as skilful, and as important as Salamanca only places Wellington in his opinion "almost on the level of Marlborough." Indeed to those who have followed Wellington from Roliça and Vimeiro to Vitoria, the Pyrenees, and Toulouse, and are familiar with the workings of his powerful and sagacious intellect, as revealed in the many volumes of his dispatches, the compliment to Marlborough may seem the greater.

It is on his work as a soldier, as a strategist and tactician, as an organizer and administrator, on his skill in planning and conducting campaigns, in winning and in using battles, that Marlborough's fame rests. Under him the British Army first became an important factor

[1] *Cf.* Coxe, i., p. viii.

in European affairs; his achievements in the Spanish Succession War won for England those acquisitions which make the Peace of Utrecht a great landmark in her maritime and colonial expansion. That he contributed in no small degree to the success of the Revolution in 1688 is undeniable, and to do so he risked much, more certainly than a mere unscrupulous self-seeker would have dreamed of hazarding, while if the motive of his action was not what he avowed it to be, his loyalty to the Protestant religion and to the Anglican Church, it is hard to produce even presumptive or inferential evidence for any other. Indeed he would have claims on the gratitude of posterity for what he then accomplished and on its sympathy in the painful decision he had to make between loyalty to his master and fidelity to his country and his Church, had his subsequent conduct only been consistent. Marlborough's record between 1691 and 1702 is what makes it difficult to base his title to an honourable position on England's roll of fame on his share in saving England from James II.

If there are black pages in Marlborough's record it is his talents and services to his country that make their blackness so prominent; moreover he has had the misfortune to have been attacked by three of the most powerful pens in English literature. Swift, Thackeray, and Macaulay are a formidable array of accusers, not so much by the weight of their authority as by the vigour and brilliance of their attacks. Thackeray's testimony indeed is but second-hand; if the picture he has drawn in *Esmond* is the most damning, because it is the most subtle, it is merely drawn from the materials provided by Swift. Unfortunately for Marl-

borough's reputation it is with this presentation that most people are familiar and such an accuser is listened to even when he is speaking without real authority. Macaulay again is not merely biassed by his zealous partisanship for the man whose painstaking work for England Marlborough's successes so completely eclipsed. He wrote of the period in Marlborough's career of which it is easiest to make capital for the prosecution, hardest to extenuate. Had Macaulay written of Blenheim or Ramillies his partisanship would hardly have got the better of his instinct for brilliant narrative. The artist, the painter of word pictures, could not have resisted doing justice to such themes. Swift too, whose allegations, Tory hack though he was, Macaulay has not scrupled to use, is the merest partisan. For all its vigour and force *The Conduct of the Allies* is a tissue of innuendoes, aspersions, assumptions, and inaccuracies. It is unfortunate that so misleading and distorted an account has been swallowed unhesitatingly by so many writers, reproduced without inquiry or criticism. Marlborough's enemies have been successful in getting their version generally accepted and once a story has obtained a footing in the text-books, especially when it has Swift, Thackeray, and Macaulay behind it, to dislodge it is no easy matter. Recent research has certainly tended to show up the unfairness and inaccuracy of many of the most commonly received accusations against Marlborough. That he sought to prolong the war for his own benefit will hardly be maintained by anyone who aims at more than quoting others without checking their statements. That he was guilty of peculation is an equally baseless legend, even if he

was undoubtedly careful almost to extremes in money matters and enjoyed through his official position sources of income which today would be as abnormal and as improper as in his day they were customary and unquestioned. Even the worst of all the charges against him, that in connection with the expedition to Brest in 1694, has proved on careful investigation less disgraceful than it appears at first sight. Moreover it is not fair to write of Marlborough as if he stood out in glaring contrast to his contemporaries. He can only be judged fairly in comparison with the other political leaders and with his fellow soldiers. A specially high standard of duty and honour is naturally expected from a soldier and this weakens the extenuation of Marlborough's faults by the favourable light in which his record appears when placed alongside Sunderland's or Godolphin's, but the age of Charles II. and the Revolution was no favourable time for morals public or private. Marlborough had been brought up in a bad school for the political virtues, if as a soldier he was trained in the best school of the day.

The military achievements of any great commander depend to a great extent upon the developments reached by the art of war in his day. Tactical methods and formations, however, and the nature and efficiency of the weapons in use are not the only limitations on the actions of generals. In the sphere of strategy the strength of the forces at a commander's disposal and the facilities available for moving and maintaining them in any given theatre of war are fundamental factors. But the ability of a country to raise armies must depend partly

on its population and wealth, partly also on its degree of political organization and development. England with an annual revenue during the war of 1689–1697 of under three millions and a population of approximately five millions, was at a disadvantage both in respect of men and means when compared with France. Louis XIV. enjoyed additional advantages in the autocratic and highly centralized nature of his government and in the strong military traditions of France. In England the Parliament was traditionally loath to provide the executive with any large force lest that force should be used to further political ends. That James II. sought to increase his Army for reasons of domestic policy undoubtedly justified his subjects in regarding his augmentations of the Army with suspicion. Once James had been overthrown and his designs frustrated, largely because the Army and its leaders had put their loyalty to their country and their religion before their loyalty to their King, once the Revolution of 1688 had made it impossible for any monarch to establish a tyranny by means of an army uncontrolled by Parliament, these suspicions were a great handicap to England in international affairs. But the mistrust persisted with the unsatisfactory and costly result that the beginning of each of her great wars has found England without the military establishments sufficient to secure prompt and economical success. In the great struggle in which Marlborough played so decisive a part this was conspicuously demonstrated. No one with any grasp of Continental affairs could fail to see that the Peace of Ryswick was but a truce, yet it was followed by wholesale reductions the disadvantage of which was bitterly

felt at the outbreak of the Spanish Succession War. Parliament was ready enough then to vote large "augmentations," but to fill up the depleted cadres, to re-form some of the disbanded regiments and to raise new units took time and it was but a few thousands that England could put into the field. This handful was afterwards considerably reinforced; but the needs of garrisoning Ireland, of finding battalions to do duty with the fleet as Marines, and of supporting the cause of the Archduke in the Spanish Peninsula itself prevented the purely British contingent in Marlborough's army from ever rising to a third of his total force.[1] The balance had to be found by hiring from Electors and Margraves and Landgraves some of the soldiers whom these German princelings were wont to maintain in numbers out of all proportion to the size and population of their territories, partly to increase their consequence and authority, partly because supplying mercenaries to wealthy but ill-prepared Powers was their most lucrative source of income. As a result Marlborough's army was lacking in homogeneity, though in those days of cosmopolitan armies when Switzerland supplied regiments to almost every country in Europe, when fidelity to an exiled King enlisted Scottish and Irish Jacobites in the service of France and Spain, when German soldiers of fortune fought under every banner and transferred their services freely and almost automatically on being taken

[1] The phrase "English troops" is frequently used in contemporary accounts to include all troops, British and foreign, in English pay and must therefore be read with caution. Thus one account of Blenheim speaks of "four columns of English foot" which did not actually include a single British battalion. In this account the word "English" is not so used.

prisoners, this was a less serious handicap than it would be in modern days. But it worked against the development of any systematic organization, against anything like the definite divisional and corps formations of a later date, for as a rule the troops of each arm in any one contingent, whatever its strength, were kept together for administrative and tactical purposes.[1]

In an army so constituted differences were constantly arising over questions of relative rank, of command, of issue of orders. There are letters from Lord Cutts to Marlborough which illustrate this point.[2] Marlborough had given explicit directions that whatever orders Prince Nassau-Saarbrück issued should be obeyed by the British troops. Cutts, in promising to "do it particularly," begged that these orders should be issued to their brigadier, Ingoldsby, and "not sent to particular regiments under his command without his knowledge," since a general officer "could not justify it to the King, the nation and his own honour" if "he suffered himself to be a cipher at the head of an English

[1] A rough organization did exist in the normal distribution of an army into two wings and two lines, the infantry and the cavalry of each wing forming separate commands roughly corresponding to corps, while the two lines were usually formed of quite separate brigades and may be said to have corresponded to divisions. Troops were usually definitely allotted to wings and lines as contemporary "Orders of Battle" show, but it is clear that this arrangement had no connection with administration. Brigades seem to have been more or less regularly constituted, consisting of from eight to twelve squadrons in the horse and three to five battalions in the foot. The British contingent usually formed two brigades of horse and three of foot, but occasionally foreign battalions and squadrons are found brigaded with British units.

[2] *Cf.* Checquers Court MSS., pp. 101 ff.

army in a foreign country." Such international jealousies were a perennial source of friction, while administrative questions were not a little complicated by the separate arrangements which had to be made with the various providers of contingents. The manipulation of these different contingents was naturally a handicap to efficiency and smoothness in internal control. More especially the difficulties of arranging year by year for the production by each petty prince of his stipulated contribution caused serious trouble to the Allied commander. The German princes were only ready to defend the Empire if they were well and promptly paid for it. No sooner therefore was the campaigning season over than Marlborough had to make the round of the courts of these potentates, cajoling, flattering, persuading. Many of these princes were past masters in the art of striking. Frederick I. of Prussia had nothing to learn in the way of "direct action," and Marlborough's troubles at the beginning of each campaign were immensely increased by the uncertainty whether the stipulated contingents would appear at the appointed time at the appointed place in the appointed numbers. His great scheme for the campaign of 1705 illustrates most conspicuously the shipwreck of skilful plans on the rocks of the failure of unenthusiastic allies to fulfil their engagements. In attempting to estimate the achievements of the Allied commanders during the wars against Louis XIV. it is hardly possible to overstate the extent to which these difficulties hampered them, especially when one of the principal Allies had to depend largely on troops not of its own nationality, the hiring of whom involved intricate negotiations almost annually recur-

ring with needy princes who were better at promising than performing.

But while political and constitutional conditions made it hard for England, indeed for any country, to develop its resources for war to anything like the degree that later ages have found possible, even more serious obstacles to "unlimited war" as expounded by Clausewitz and as practised in modern times were to be found in the economic sphere. To maintain large armies in the field is at bottom a question of supplying them, of the productivity of agriculture, of the possibilities of transporting to any theatre of operations the products of other districts. At the end of the seventeenth century agriculture was still very backward, communications by land were primitive and defective, and the size and movements of armies were much influenced and restricted by the capacity of the countries in which they operated to produce food and forage. Campaigning was therefore governed largely by considerations of weather; armies were early or late in quitting winter quarters according to the forwardness or backwardness of the spring, a fine autumn and an open winter would allow operations to continue for weeks beyond the normal date for quitting the field.[1] Thus strategy was greatly influenced by questions such as the earliest date at which green forage would be available, the length of time which the forage and supplies in any district would suffice for the force desiring to operate there,[2] the possibility of collecting magazines of provisions in preparation for a coming move without thereby exposing the

[1] *Cf.* Chapter XV., for the unusual prolongation of the 1708 campaign.
[2] *Cf.* Disp., v., p. 369.

intentions of the commander, the necessity of securing the water communications, in those days of greater importance than the roads.[1] If the difficulties of collecting and transporting supplies to the spot where they were needed made generals prefer to operate in the richer, better cultivated, and more productive districts such as Lombardy and Flanders, where moreover communications were better, it was precisely in these districts that movement was most obstructed by artificial obstacles. If in Flanders the roads were better than elsewhere and the network of rivers and canals which intersected the country greatly facilitated the movement of guns and baggage, at every point of junction on these waterways a strong place was to be found.[2] No country in Europe was as thickly studded with fortresses, so full of towns provided with defences. To operate in such a country involved proceeding methodically, securing place after place, systematic clearing away of obstacles to the use of different lines of communications. it meant working almost by methods of siege-warfare. To this may be mainly attributed the predominance of sieges over pitched battles in the wars of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Even a general imbued to the full with the spirit of the initiative and keenly anxious for battle found himself compelled to spend his time in reducing petty places which obstructed movement. To a commander of the school of Louis of Baden, whose inclinations were for

[1] Thus Colonel E. Revett writes in 1709: "This I think I may lay down as a principle that we must hug either the Scheldt or the Lys for the conveniency of living." Checquers Court MSS., p. 199.

[2] *Cf.* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 171.

the defensive, this state of things was welcome. Towards the close of the Thirty Years' War a preference for defensive methods, for avoiding battle, had been developing. To guard against defeat came to be reckoned more important than to win victories. To attack unless at a great advantage became unfashionable. Commanders preferred to select strong positions and there await attack. In a backward and sparsely cultivated country like most of Southern Germany decisions could easily be delayed, since extensive forests and marshes restricted movement and offered many strong positions too formidable when entrenched to be attacked frontally and too well protected by natural obstacles to be readily turned. And in more advanced districts art replaced nature. With countless fortified places to serve as pivots round which an army might manœuvre almost for ever, utilizing them as shields against attack, to protect flanks and communications, the commander who aimed at delay and evading decision had many advantages; to force on a battle and obtain a decision in Flanders in the presence of all these fortresses was a labour for Sisyphus: rapid achieving of great results was out of the question.

Among the elements which favoured the defence was the weakness of the artillery available. The guns of the seventeenth century were deficient alike in accuracy, in range, in penetrative power and in durability, and, as practised by Vauban and his school, the art of fortification had gone far to make good against the attack the ground which the defence had lost when artillery first became effective. A well-prepared and stoutly defended fortress like Lille, or even a petty place like

Aire, was capable of holding out for as much as a couple of months, and though the necessity of saving time sometimes led to unusual methods and more rapid successes, such gains were usually achieved at great cost in lives. It was this same ineffectiveness of the guns of the day which lent to such celebrated fortified lines as Louis of Baden's masterpiece at Stolhofen in the Rhine valley much of the value they possessed. To breach such lines with the pieces available would have been a tedious process. Before a breach was practicable the defenders would have ample time to reinforce the point attacked. Hence when such lines were penetrated it was usually, as in 1705 at Tirlemont and in 1711 at Arleux, the result of manœuvre and surprise.

These difficulties in forcing battle on an unwilling enemy were much increased by the nature of the formations and drill in use. Not even the reforms of Gustavus Adolphus, imitated by his successors both in the Swedish and in the French service, had gone far enough in the direction of mobility and elasticity to render armies really supple and rapid in manœuvre. To deploy into battle order was a lengthy process, and while the would-be attacker was engaged in this task the other side, if disinclined to put matters to the test, might be slipping away. The adoption in the later part of the eighteenth century not only of more flexible formations and of a higher standard of training in drill and manœuvre but of a regular and systematic divisional organization was needed before real rapidity in deployment was to be possible. And until this state of affairs was reached strategy could hardly accomplish all that proved within its reach in the wars of the Revolution

and of Napoleon. It is idle to expect in the age of Louis XIV. results such as were achieved a hundred years later under different conditions.

But when Marlborough began his military career one great master of the art of war had already shown what could be accomplished by a trained and disciplined army, inspired by the spirit of the offensive, employing greatly improved tactical methods, and handled so as not only to win battles but to turn victories systematically to advantage. Gustavus had fallen eighteen years before John Churchill's birth, but he had left a school behind him, and from Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, Torstenson, Wrangel, and his other pupils his methods and traditions had been handed on to the two brilliant figures who dominated the military thought and practice of Europe between 1643 and 1678, Turenne and Condé. But the story of the development of tactical and strategical methods and ideas must be taken back beyond Gustavus to Maurice of Nassau. Maurice was important as a pioneer in the art of military engineering, as a disciplinarian and organizer, as a practical student of tactics whose formations were designed to get the most out of the weapons of the day. Maurice was, moreover, a skilful strategist who knew how to carry on operations systematically and with a definite end in view. Gustavus, however, marks a distinct advance alike in organization, in tactics, and in strategy. If it is as a tactician that he was greatest the mobility which was the foundation of his tactical reforms was no less important in his strategy. His care to secure his base in Pomerania before adventuring his army far inland, his rapid marching, his eagerness for battle—wherein

he improved upon Maurice's traditions—his wide-reaching combinations, his efforts to direct to a common aim armies operating in different quarters, and his planning of marches and movements to bring him, as after Breitenfeld, into the position from which his future operations could be carried on to the greatest purpose, all earn for Gustavus a secure place among strategists. Similarly his reputation as a tactician is soundly based on his reduction of the depth of the formations both of infantry and cavalry, on his improvements in field artillery which he not only increased but made mobile and lighter, on his care to develop the fire power of his infantry and to reintroduce shock action, although in modified form, as the proper tactics for cavalry,[1] and on his substitution of smaller and mobile divisions capable of manœuvring on the battle-field for the massive and clumsy bodies favoured by contemporary Spanish and Imperialist generals.

Turenne had not actually served under Gustavus but in him the traditions of the Swedish school were carried on and developed. Unlike Gustavus, Turenne is great mainly as a strategist, though he has many great tactical successes to his credit and often showed that he could handle all three arms in combination as ably as the Lion of the North himself and could adapt his formations and methods to varying circumstances.[2] But it was as a leader, as a disciplinarian able to exact obedience from officers as well as from men, as an administrator ever careful of his troops' welfare, that Turenne stood out. He knew his men well—with the small armies of the day it was quite possible—he shared their fatigues

[1] *Cf.* Lloyd, pp. 109–110.

[2] *Cf.* Colin, *Tactique*, p. 19.

and privations, and at the same time that he studied carefully the character and methods of his opponents he learnt what he could demand from his own soldiers. He was sometimes reproached with being over-methodical but he was often in a position where he had to make the best of inferior numbers, an art in which he himself declared he had learnt much from Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, and Napoleon noted it as a peculiarity of Turenne that he grew more daring with experience. Turenne, it has been said, showed that it was possible to obtain success without engaging in pitched battles,[1] but this does not imply that he was of the school which looked on battles as always to be avoided. Turenne indeed was for fighting as many battles as he could—in 1673 he urged Condé to avoid sieges and to fight whenever possible—but he did not dash headlong at a strongly posted enemy, preferring, as in his last campaign, to give battle after his dexterous manœuvres had forced his enemy into a position at once strategically and tactically unsound. Before Turenne's day,[2] the art of war had still been largely an affair of sieges, mainly a matter of pivoting round strong places in order to take or relieve them, a lengthy and inconclusive process. Turenne cast loose from this tradition and one of his first lessons for a young soldier who came under him and profited from his example was the importance of framing plans of campaign on broad lines and for big objects, of looking beyond the immediate surrounding. It has been said of Turenne that he "imported into the art of war daring in marches."[3] Marlborough's march

[1] *Cf.* Roy, *Turenne*, p. 449.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 450.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 450.

to the Danube in 1704 showed how Turenne's greatest pupil had profited by his master's teaching.

Condé, the other great French soldier of the middle of the seventeenth century, has won the admiration both of contemporaries and of later ages by the brilliance and daring of his tactics. Condé had inspiration, dash, audacity. He had stamped himself on men's imaginations at Rocroi not only by headlong courage but by prompt and decisive handling of his cavalry to repair the fortunes of the day; he had shown how to keep a reserve in hand and how to employ it, and it was not at Rocroi only that daring and energy had carried him to success. Contemporaries might agree that at the end of a campaign it were best to be with Turenne, but they admitted that at the end of a battle it were best to be with Condé. Marlborough, it would seem, never came directly under Condé, but there is something of Condé's inspiration and readiness to take risks in his daring attack on the strongly entrenched Schellenberg: it might have been Condé who rallied and succoured the broken squadrons at Ramillies, who saved the critical situation at Blenheim. If from Turenne a man could learn how to use victories, Condé's battles gave many examples of how victories might be won and the most made of the three arms at the stage of development they had reached.

When Louis XIV. invaded the United Provinces and Marlborough got his first experience of European war, cavalry still dominated the battle-field. They were beginning to discard armour, though the cuirass and steel headpiece were still in use, but if this decrease of weight increased mobility, in the French Army the

cavalry had not wholly adopted the shock tactics which Rupert and Cromwell had developed out of the system of Gustavus, but clung rather to the reliance on fire of the German "reiters" of an earlier day. But if cavalry retained pride of place it was because infantry, still divided into "shot" and "pikes," had not yet combined in one weapon missile action and close quarter action,[1] and were thus still at a serious disadvantage. The pikeman, helpless beyond the reach of his ten- to twelve-foot weapon, had to rely upon the solidity of his formations both to resist cavalry charges and to give him weight and momentum in the attack, but this same solidity rendered him as good a target to missiles as Harold's axemen had presented behind their shield-wall at Hastings or Wallace's "schiltrons" at Falkirk. To deploy in the face of hostile cavalry invited disaster. Similarly the musketeer was little more independent of the pikeman than the archers of the Edwardian armies had been of the dismounted men at arms. Musketry was, it is true, improving rapidly and as the seventeenth century progressed the musketeer gradually emancipated himself from this dependence. The lighter weapon which Gustavus had substituted for the old clumsy musket that needed a rest,[2] the replacement of the matchlock and the wheel-lock by the fusil or flint-lock,[3] the more rapid rate of fire thus made possible,

[1] Colin (*Tactique*, p. 18) describes the method of effecting this combination as "the preoccupation of generals" at this time.

[2] The rest was not used in the British Army after 1665: *cf.* Clifford Walton, p 330.

[3] While it was calculated that the matchlock man took in reloading time enough to fire six volleys, the introduction of the flintlock reduced

between them helped infantry to meet cavalry on more equal terms before the century was out. The steady increase in the proportion of "shot" to "pikes"—from one to five in the sixteenth century to five to one by 1680—the corresponding change in the proportion of foot-soldiers to horsemen, which rose from one to two in Turenne's earlier campaigns to three to one before his death, indicate clearly the nature of the change in progress. But not till the introduction of the bayonet about 1670 was the main weakness of infantry redressed, nor did the original "plug bayonet" which blocked the muzzle of the musket mean as great an advance as the "socket-bayonet" introduced some twelve years later, which allowed the musket to be fired with the bayonet fixed.

Even then the greater mobility of cavalry was an enormous asset in their favour; it meant more rapid manœuvring power, greater capacity to profit by chances offered by the effective fire of supporting artillery or infantry, and this advantage was increased by the relatively cumbrous formations still in use for infantry even after Gustavus had reduced the normal depth from ten ranks to six and had substituted battalions of four hundred to five hundred men for the massive "tercios" of the Spanish school. With smaller units changes of front or direction were more easily made, flexibility both on the march and in battle was

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this almost by half (Colin, *Transformations*, p. 14), and by 1700 a man could fire at least one shot a minute (Colin, *Tactique*, p. 26). Actually the small amount of ammunition carried and the short range at which effective fire was possible made rapidity and volume of fire less desired than accuracy (*cf.* Lloyd, p. 154).

increased. Even then all wheelings had to be made at the halt and the deployment from march formations into battle formations was a lengthy process. The greater the depth and the number of ranks the more difficult it was to form line from column.

This adoption of smaller units was not only due to a desire for greater speed and freedom in manœuvring, it grew out of the need to cover with musketry the front of the pikemen. Maurice of Nassau had formed his pikemen in blocks of ten deep with a front of twenty-five with equal numbers of musketeers posted on the flanks to the same depth, so that an advance against the pikemen would come under the fire of the musketeers and an attack on the musketeers only would be liable to a counter-charge by the pikes. This formation, almost identical in principle with that of the English archers and dismounted men at arms of the wars of the Edwards and Henry V, had been adopted with success by the Swedes and by them transmitted to the French, from whose service the pike had not yet disappeared when Marlborough served his apprenticeship in their ranks. When the Spanish Succession War began the adoption of the flintlock and socket bayonet as the universal weapon for infantry had greatly simplified formations, allowing the whole of any infantry unit to be drawn up in one body, usually four but sometimes three deep. There was less waste of time than in the days when musketeers and pikemen had to be elaborately intermingled; moreover the great improvements in the firearm allowed a reduction in the space taken by each man as the flintlock could be handled in half the room needed for the management of the clumsier match-

lock; the files could thus be closed and a greater volume of fire delivered on any given front.[1]

Thus by the time of Marlborough's great series of campaigns armies were usually drawn up for battle mainly with a view to the development of their fire-power, and the normal formation was to range the infantry in the centre in two lines, flanked by the cavalry on both wings, also in two lines, and occasionally a small reserve behind both of horse and foot. Artillery were usually posted in front of the infantry and were employed mainly in the opening stages of a battle to cover the deployment of their own side and hinder the enemy's. Once the battle had been joined and the troops had got to close quarters the opportunities for effective action of artillery were limited, more especially by the difficulty of shifting the clumsy field-pieces of the day which were as a rule moved and manœuvred not by soldiers but by civilian drivers, hired along with their gun-teams from civilian contractors and naturally disinclined to run any avoidable risks. Under such conditions it was hard even for Turenne or Marlborough to produce Napoleonic effects from their artillery; that Marlborough, as at Blenheim and at Malplaquet, did manage to make notable use of his guns in the later stages of a battle is not his least title to fame as a tactician. In the last half of the seventeenth century it was

[1] In the British service the fire was delivered by platoons, not by ranks, platoons being divided into "firings" which meant that every third platoon fired together, followed by the other "firings" in succession while those who had fired first reloaded. This served the double purpose of allowing a practically continuous fire to be maintained from all parts of the line and yet no part was all unloaded together. *Cf.* Kane: *System of discipline for a Regiment of Foot upon Action.*

still the practice for the smaller field-guns to be attached in pairs to the infantry battalions, a custom derived from Gustavus. These guns were as a rule three-pounders weighing about eight hundredweight and about six feet long; at Sedgemoor they appear to have been worked by men of the infantry regiments, so that they may be compared to the pair of machine guns with which British infantry battalions were furnished in 1914. The heavier guns in use ranged from the saker, approximately a six-pounder, and the demi-culverin, (9 lb. to 11 lb.), to the culverin of 18 lb., the demi-cannon of 36 lb. and the cannon royal of as much as even 60 lb., but the larger varieties though nominally field-guns were altogether too heavy and clumsy for the field and even in sieges it was not usual to employ anything beyond a twenty-four-pounder.[1] Moreover, though an artillery corps was in existence at the end of the seventeenth century, both artillery and engineers belonged rather to the Ordnance Department than to the Army, and the Royal Regiment of Artillery did not come into existence till 1716 (*cf.* p. 505) while the formation of the Royal Engineers did not take place till the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Marlborough's day engineer officers together with such bodies of pioneers and military artificers as served under them were only partly military in character, though officers of infantry regiments are often found acting as engineers while retaining their positions in their own units.[2] Marlborough, therefore, like Wellington a hundred years later, was seriously handicapped when it came to sieges by the lack of a larger and more established engineer

[1] *Cf.* Clifford Walton, chapter xxx. [2] *Ibid.*

service, a handicap to be remembered when some of his sieges may seem unduly protracted or unnecessarily costly.

But if the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers did not yet form an integral part of the British Army, Marlborough's campaigns are none the less important as the period in which that Army established on a firm footing its reputation and its claim to be reckoned one of the great armies of Europe. Before the ten great campaigns in which Marlborough led it to victory after victory, never losing a battle, never failing to take a town he had besieged, the British Army had but few successes to its credit. It is to Marlborough's days that the majority of its great traditions may be traced back. Before his victories a few of its regiments had seen hard service and had earned much credit in our first war on African soil; many regiments had shared in William's one great triumph at Namur; many had acquitted themselves as honourably but less successfully at Steenkirk and at Landen. In the main, however, the story of William's wars had been one of scant success, though his failures could certainly not be charged to his British regiments: still our record on the Continent had lacked brilliance and the chief successes achieved in the years 1689–1697 had been in what was really a civil war. When it fell to Marlborough's lot to attain high command the British Army had still its name to make. It was under Marlborough that it may be said to have come into its own and it is his peculiar distinction that he was the first British commander to achieve great things at the head of regiments of the standing Army of Great Britain.

Marlborough himself was ten years older than the British Army. The regiment which laid down its arms on Tower Hill on Saint Valentine's day, 1661, as the last remnant of the New Model Army, to take them up again there and then as "the Lord General's Regiment of Footguards," famous all over the world now as the Coldstream Guards, had been raised in the year of Marlborough's birth out of two older regiments of the New Model,[1] but it is with the Coldstreamers' entry into Charles II.'s service that the history of the Army properly begins. Simultaneously with the decision to retain Monck's regiment orders were issued for raising a new regiment of Guards to be commanded by Colonel John Russell and a regiment of horse under Lord Oxford, while the Life Guards were also brought into existence. These were formed partly from Monck's own Life Guard, reformed together with the Coldstream, partly by bringing over from Dunkirk the troop commanded by James, Duke of York, which had formed part of the little army of Royalist refugees collected in 1656 by Charles when in exile to fight for Philip IV. of Spain against France and her English Ally. Nor was this troop the only contribution of the Royalist refugee army to the newly established forces. After the Restoration the remnants of the Royalists, six infantry battalions of varying strength, had been collected at Dunkirk where they lived in complete amity with the ex-Cromwellian regiments already in garrison,[2] the men with whom the Royalists had actually fought on Dunkirk Dunes in

[1] *Cf.* Corbett's *Monck*, p. 70.

[2] *Cf.* Firth, "Royalist and Cromwellian Armies in Flanders, 1657–1662," *Royal Historical Society's Transactions*, 1903.

September, 1658. One of these six, the King's Own, was brought to England on the sale of Dunkirk to France and became part of the English establishment from November 19, 1662, being amalgamated in February, 1665, with the regiment of Foot Guards raised in 1661 by Colonel Russell. It was in the regiment thus formed, the present Grenadier Guards, that Marlborough was two years later to receive his first commission and the regiment is as certainly a link with the Royalist refugee army of 1656–1660 as are the Coldstreamers with the New Model. Yet another existing regiment has the distinction of being descended from both these forces. In December, 1661, Robert Harley's regiment, one of the Cromwellian regiments of foot which had held Dunkirk for the Protector, was sent to Tangier, just acquired for England by Charles II.'s marriage to Catherine of Braganza. Arriving there in January, 1662, it was subsequently incorporated in the Governor's Regiment to which were also drafted at least two units of the Royalist refugee army. The Governor's Regiment, to which Marlborough had been attached during his service at Tangier, subsequently returned to England under the command of the famous Colonel Percy Kirke, being then styled the Queen's Regiment, a title it still retains. As the original Governor's Regiment into which Harley's and the Royalist regiments were drafted had been raised in England in October, 1661, the Queen's took rank from that date, counting therefore as the Second Foot.[1] An even older regiment was placed on the British establishment when in the autumn of 1661 Louis XIV. sanctioned the return

[1] *Cf.* Firth, *op. cit.*

to England of Lord George Douglas's Scottish regiment in the French service. This regiment, the present Royal Scots, could trace its descent back to the famous Scottish brigades of Gustavus Adolphus, whose remnants had after many vicissitudes passed into French pay in 1633 when the Scots had been formed into one regiment as Hepburn's. They subsequently returned to France in 1662, and were still serving Louis XIV. when Marlborough obtained his first experience of European warfare under Turenne.

Two other additions had been made to the standing forces before Marlborough joined. In October, 1664, a regiment was raised for service on the fleet, known indifferently as the "Maritime Regiment" and the "Lord High Admiral's Regiment" when not designated by the name of its colonel, James, Duke of York. It had the distinction of being clothed in yellow instead of the normal red.[1] This regiment, in which Marlborough served for over eight years, was disbanded shortly after the Revolution, upon which its precedence as third among the infantry of the Line passed to a more famous corps, the Buffs. Ever since 1572, when Thomas Morgan and his little band of Londoners went over to the Netherlands to fight for William the Silent and the Protestant cause, there had always been English and Scottish companies in the Dutch service, conspicuous by their valour and endurance in many a hard-fought battle from Zutphen and Vere's great fight near Nieuport onwards. When the Second Dutch War broke out the English companies quitted the Dutch service and were placed on the English establishment as the "Hol-

[1] *Cf.* Clifford Walton, p. 503.

land Regiment" in June, 1665. On three subsequent occasions Charles II. added considerably to his Army. In 1667 a dozen regiments of foot were raised for use against the Dutch but disbanded directly peace was made. For the Third Dutch War again substantial additions were made and in the summer of 1673, besides the thirty companies actually serving on the fleet, there was collected at Blackheath and then at Yarmouth an army under Count Schomberg about fourteen thousand strong. The peace with Holland of February, 1674, was followed by the disbandment of such of the newly raised forces as were not transferred to the quite separate Irish establishment or sent over to France to fight for Louis XIV. Finally in the spring of 1678, when Danby at last induced Charles to support Holland, horse, foot, and dragoons to the number of thirty thousand were raised, only to be disbanded in the winter following the Peace of Nimuegen. In the end the only permanent increase in Charles II.'s Army after Marlborough joined was that on the evacuation of Tangiers, Lord Plymouth's Foot (now the King's Own), which had been added to the garrison in 1680, came on the English establishment as did also the Tangier Horse, likewise raised in 1680, who were thereupon increased to a complete regiment of dragoons (the present Royal Dragoons) the Colonelcy of which was given to Churchill.

James II.'s reign saw larger additions. Monmouth's rebellion served as the excuse for raising nine regiments of horse, as many of foot, and two of dragoons, while later in the reign more infantry were added and several units brought over from the large Irish Army, the total force under arms at the Revolution being nearly forty

thousand. The majority of the units of James II.'s Army passed straight into the service of William III., for whose wars in Ireland and Flanders substantial increases were made. Not many of William's additions, however, survived the Peace of Ryswick, which was followed by the reduction of the troops on the English establishment to seven thousand and of those in Scotland to four thousand; indeed only the retention of an Irish establishment of twelve thousand allowed any considerable number of regiments to escape disbandment. By reducing to a very low establishment the units retained, cavalry regiments being under three hundred and infantry barely 450, it proved possible to keep on foot all the present regiments of Dragoon Guards, seven regiments of dragoons[1] and twenty-seven of foot.[2] The Spanish Succession War saw many new regiments added, but of these again the majority were disbanded after the Peace of Utrecht. Only one regiment of dragoons[3] and twelve of foot[4] represent the additions made in the days of Marlborough's great campaigns. But even so a substantial portion of the British Army of today has an unbroken connection with Marlborough's days; seven cavalry and seventeen infantry regiments bear battle honours earned under his command; another half dozen carry an honour earned in a campaign for which as supreme director of the military efforts of the country he was responsible; many others, though denied official

[1] *I. e.*, the present Seventh Hussars and all senior.

[2] *I. e.*, the present 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and all senior.

[3] The present Eighth Hussars.

[4] Those from the old 28th (1st Gloucestershires) to 39th (1st Dorsetshires), both included.

recognition of their achievements, have every right to be proud of what they accomplished under him or in his day. In the story of the British Army therefore Marlborough's campaigns have a peculiar importance and it should not be overlooked that he was the first British general to direct the armies of a great European coalition, whose military merits were acknowledged by the commanders of the contingents of our allies to entitle him to the supreme place among them. Obstructive and jealous Dutchmen might carp and criticize, might rob the British commander of the successes his well-laid plans had brought within his reach, but in the armies of the Grand Alliance he stood out as the one man pre-eminently fitted for the highest command. He owed much to his gallant and skilful colleague Eugene, but what Marlborough accomplished without Eugene's help will bear comparison with any of the triumphs they achieved in common. the Schellenberg, Ramillies, the forcing of Villeroi's lines at Tirlemont in 1705 and of Villers *non plus ultra* in 1711, show that Marlborough in no sense depended on his colleague for his successes. But the forces on which he did depend, the foundations of his successes, the elements in his army to which he trusted most were undoubtedly the squadrons, battalions, and gunners who had followed him from the other side of the North Sea and who proved themselves worthy of the master of the military art who led them.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS

THE CHURCHILL FAMILY—BOYHOOD—ENTRANCE INTO ARMY—SERVICE AT TANGIER—SERVICE AT SEA IN THE THIRD DUTCH WAR.

THE elaborate genealogy by which Marlborough's biographer Lediard traces his hero's descent back to Roger de Courcil, who "came over with the Conqueror," has the authority of family tradition behind it[1] and is possibly something more than a mere concession to the conventions of the biographical art as practised in the eighteenth century. It would be unprofitable to enumerate many generations of Marlborough's ancestors but undoubtedly the Churchills had long been landowners in the Western counties. Like the families with which they had intermarried, the Drakes, the Winstons, and the Peverells, they belonged to the class from which the Knights of the Shire had been recruited for centuries, from which the Tudors had selected their Justices of the Peace.

Marlborough's father, Winston Churchill of Mintern in Dorset, was the son of John Churchill of Weston Glanville in that county by his wife, Sarah, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Henry Winston of Standiston in Gloucestershire. Born in 1620, Winston Churchill matriculated at St. John's College, Oxford, in April, 1636, but left the University without taking a degree. This was probably due to other reasons than lack of

[1] *Cf.* Winston Churchill's letter in Bath MSS., ii., p. 173.

ability for he was "himself a man of letters and wrote a history of the Kings of England," entitled *Divi Britannici;*[1] he was, moreover, among the first Fellows of the Royal Society, while the Bath MSS. reveal him as something of a herald and genealogist. Not long after his leaving Oxford the political conflicts of the day developed into civil war and in the struggle between King and Parliament both Winston and his father were found on the Royalist side. Winston indeed was prominent as a cavalry leader in the Western army with which Hopton and Granville swept the South-Western counties in the course of 1643, and was present at the hard-fought battles at Lansdown Hill near Bath (July 5th/15th) and at Roundway Down near Devizes (July 13th/23rd). He also took part in the effort to capture Taunton, so stoutly defended by Blake from August, 1644, to June, 1645, and be shared in Rupert's unsuccessful defence of Bristol.

After the collapse of Royalist resistance the two Churchills did not escape the heavy punishments inflicted by the victorious Parliament. John Churchill, fined £440, got off lightly but the much heavier penalty imposed upon Winston, £4446, testifies to his prominence as a Royalist. He could only meet this severe impost by selling his property. Some years earlier he had married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Drake of Ash House near Axminster. Elizabeth Drake's mother was a woman of much force of character. The daughter of Lord Boteler by Elizabeth Villiers, sister of Charles I.'s favourite Buckingham, she was a strong Puritan and had actually invited the Parliamentary commander at

[1] *Cf* Coxe, p. 8.

Lyme Regis to garrison Ash House. Upon this a Royalist force descended upon Ash, forced its way in and expelled the Parliamentary garrison. In the contest the house suffered considerably. Part indeed was burnt down but the stubborn old Puritan lady continued to live in the rest, and when the sale of Winston Churchill's lands left him and his wife houseless it was at Ash that they found shelter and at Ash that most of their children were born.

John Churchill, born on May 26th/June 6, 1650, was the third child but his elder brother, Winston, died in infancy as did six others of the twelve born to his parents. Of the five who survived infancy, moreover, Theobald, the youngest son, died when only twenty-three. Both the other brothers were closely associated with Marlborough, George, who entered the Navy, attained flag-rank and virtually controlled the Navy while Prince George of Denmark was Lord High Admiral, and in that capacity proved most helpful to his brother. Charles, five and a half years John's junior, became a soldier and rose to the rank of Lieutenant General, serving with distinction in command of Marlborough's infantry in the famous march up the Rhine and at Blenheim. He and George both died before their brother, and Arabella, the eldest of the family, alone survived him. She entered the household of the Duke of York as maid of honour in 1666, became mistress to the Duke, and mother of a son who was destined to be one of her brother's most formidable opponents, James, Duke of Berwick.[1]

[1] Coxe asserts (i., p. 13) that John Churchill received his first commission before Arabella became James's mistress, but the connexion began

Of John Churchill's early years little need be said. A noted Royalist like Winston Churchill naturally lived a secluded life under the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and it is probable that, being a man of scholarly tastes as well as none too affluent, he himself undertook his children's education. From him John must have heard stories of the Civil War, though in the troubled atmosphere of that age of wars not much can have been needed to turn the boy's mind towards a military career. It is just possible that as a child of nearly three John may have heard the guns opening that Three Days' Battle, February 18–20, 1653, which beginning off Portland, not twenty-five miles from his home, and ending off Calais Cliffs, restored to England the supremacy at sea wrested from her by Tromp at Dungeness in the previous November. From the tuition of the rector of a neighbouring parish, Mr. Farrant of Musbury, a man famous for his piety,[1] young Churchill is related to have benefited greatly and we may trace his unquestioned adhesion to Protestantism to the teaching of a man who, though in every way fitted to be a Bishop, steadily refused such preferment.

John Churchill was just ten when the Restoration brought about an improvement in the family fortunes. More fortunate than some Cavaliers who had lost all in the Royalist cause, Winston Churchill received a post as one of the Commissioners of the Court of Claims established in Dublin to settle cases arising out of the

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not later than January, 1668, as in that month she received a grant of £1000 a year from James. (*Cf.* Callaghan, *Irish Brigades in the Service of France*, p. 208.)

[1] *Cf. The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals*, p. 6.

displacement of loyalists through the Cromwellian land settlement, and to Dublin he transferred his family early in 1662. Here John attended the City of Dublin Free School, but his stay in Dublin was brief, for in 1663 his father was recalled to London,[1] knighted and employed at Court as Junior Clerk Comptroller of the King's Household.[2] This led John Churchill to a much more famous establishment than the Dublin Free School, for towards the end of 1663 he was entered at St. Paul's School and there he seems to have finished his school-days. The school was closed in the summer of 1665 on account of the plague, burnt down in the Great Fire, and not reopened till 1670 by which time John Churchill was receiving education of a very different type, having already had his "baptism of fire" under the walls of Tangier.

Between leaving school and beginning his military career John Churchill obtained employment as page to the Duke of York, probably on his father's returning to Dublin to resume his duties as Commissioner of Claims. The story narrated by Coxe is that James, himself keenly interested in military matters, had noticed his page's inclination to the soldier's profession. James was wont to attend the exercises of the Foot Guards in Hyde Park and young Churchill, who accompanied him on these occasions, must have shown his interest in an unmistakable fashion. On James's asking him what profession he desired to follow Churchill is said to have seized the opportunity to ask for "a pair of colours,"

[1] Hist. MSS. Com. Fourth Report, p. 246.

[2] It may be noted that Winston Churchill left his accounts in great confusion and many creditors behind him. Ormonde MSS., iv., 90.

in other words a commission as ensign, in the King's Regiment of Foot Guards, to which he was gazetted in September 14/24, 1667, being then a little over seventeen. This unit, the present Grenadier Guards, consisted when Churchill joined it of twenty-four companies and was commanded by Colonel Russell who had raised one of its two battalions in 1661.

The Court of Charles II. was hardly calculated to call out the better qualities in a youth of handsome appearance and ingratiating manners, and Churchill did not avoid getting entangled in various intrigues. But it would be unfair to judge by the standard of subsequent ages such a story as that of his connexion with his cousin the Duchess of Cleveland, an abandoned woman, his senior in age not to mention experience of the world. The intrigue brought Churchill into notice at Court and is responsible for his figuring, when only an ensign in the Guards, in the memoirs of de Grammont and in the dispatches of the French Ambassador, de Barillon. That it brought him into disfavour with Charles seems probable, but the story that the Duchess presented him with a large sum of money because he leapt out of the window to avoid being caught with her by the King is not above suspicion. It rests on the anything but unimpeachable authority of Mrs. Manley, the notorious author of the *New Atlantis*, and is not much fortified by the support of Chesterfield (*Chesterfield's Letters* i., 136) a malicious repeater of scandal, though for Churchill's purchase of an annuity about this time Chesterfield's evidence may be accepted since Lord Halifax, from whom the annuity was purchased, was his grandfather. But even if the whole story be true Churchill

was not grossly immoral before marriage and it is typical of the spitefulness of his enemies that his constancy and fidelity to his wife after marriage has been made the occasion of sneers and jibes. In the Whitehall of the Restoration it would have been remarkable indeed if a young man had not succumbed to temptation, but Churchill at any rate never allowed his pleasures and indulgences to get the better of him. Those who must always put the worst construction on Marlborough's actions may see in this nothing more than a proof of his "cold and calculating nature," his self-control always directed to his own advancement. But if ambition and a determination to make a name for himself were, as Lord Wolseley suggests, the motives which saved him from sinking into a mere voluptuary it should be sufficient that Churchill's intrigues were confined to his adolescence and early manhood; there is no Lady Hamilton in his story.

Moreover, Court life did not suffice to detain Churchill at Whitehall when there was a chance of seeing active service, even in a quarter where little was to be gained but danger and hardships. With Charles II.'s marriage England had obtained the island of Bombay, and, what was far more important, the city of Tangier. Situated at the entrance to the Mediterranean, Tangier had great strategic importance and greater possibilities. Sir Julian Corbett in his *England in the Mediterranean* has well brought out the importance of the story of Tangier, the embodiment of Charles II.'s effort to continue and develop the maritime and colonial side of Cromwell's foreign policy, to which Charles clung so tenaciously, only to sacrifice it in the end to his disastrous domestic

policy. Tangier, if retained by England, might have been all Gibraltar has been and is, and much more beside, the starting point of a great North African empire of incalculable value. Marlborough's grasp of the strategical importance of the Straits of Gibraltar, his realization of the peculiar opportunities of the Mediterranean for the utilization of sea-power, may be traced in some degree to his having seen service at Tangier. But the immediate value of his experience at Tangier was his introduction to the realities of his profession. Tangier was to the nascent British Army of the seventeenth century a school of practical soldiering. It was no place for "fair weather" soldiers who were not prepared to stand privations and incur constant danger. The Moors were a formidable foe, crafty and resourceful, skilled in laying ambushes, enterprising, tenacious, and almost on an equality with the garrison in respect of arms and equipment. The Tangier garrison had no such advantage in weapons over their foes as has often helped British soldiers against overwhelming odds in Asia and Africa, and the record of the twenty years during which Tangier flew the English flag is highly honourable to the regiments which formed its garrison.

The years 1668–1670, within which Churchill's service at Tangier fell, were not years of special stress for the garrison, for domestic feuds among their Moorish enemies had somewhat relaxed the pressure, but there were constant bickerings with the Moors which at times blazed up into more serious hostilities. Thus in July, 1669, the Moors attempted to capture James Fort, one of the outlying defences, only to be repulsed with heavy

losses[1] and a young officer of the garrison cannot have lacked opportunities of acquiring a real knowledge of his profession, even if no chance of earning particular distinction came his way. Of his actual services no details are known. He would appear to have arrived about the end of 1668, and to have been attached as a "volunteer" to the Governor's Regiment. This was the famous "Old Tangier Regiment," the corps raised in 1661 by the Earl of Peterborough.[2] As he was only attached to the regiment his name does not appear in the lists of its officers and its records contain no mention of his services.[3] A mere ensign in the Foot Guards was not to be distinguished among the numerous young officers who served from time to time with the regiment.

On returning from Tangier in 1670 or 1671 Churchill resumed his position in the Duke of York's household, but it was not long before the outbreak of the Third Dutch War gave him another opportunity of seeing service. The first engagement in which he actually took part was not, however, one in which much credit was to be gained by anyone. The attack delivered, contrary to the accepted conventions of international relations, without any previous declaration of hostilities, by a squadron under Sir Robert Holmes upon the home-coming fleet of Dutch merchantmen from Smyrna (March 13, 1672) was not exactly creditable to the English government nor was it even successful. The escorting Dutch warships made a stout fight and though Holmes sank one of them and captured another with

[1] *Cf.* Davis, *History of the Queen's Regiment*, i, 98.
[2] *Cf.* p. 25.
[3] *Cf.* Davis, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 22, and vol. vi.

some four merchantmen the bulk of the convoy escaped him. It was thus not a very satisfactory story which Churchill and his comrade George Legge, afterwards 1st Earl of Dartmouth and, like Churchill, one of the household of the Duke of York, had to tell when, as Secretary Williamson's Diary notes,[1] they arrived in London from the Downs with news of the fight in which they had taken part, their companies of the King's Guards having been shipped on board Holmes's squadron just before the attack. For the soldiers of King Charles II.'s little Army such service at sea was nothing out of the common. The Royal Marines were not yet in existence and it was the custom to embark soldiers by companies on board the ships of the fleet. Indeed in the war which was formally declared a week after Holmes's attack the Army was destined to see more fighting at sea than on its own element. When the main fleet put to sea in May over a third of the infantry on the establishment at the outbreak of war went with it, among them Churchill's company. This, the senior company in the Army, was naturally shipped on board the *Royal Prince*, the flagship of Churchill's patron the Duke of York, who commanded the fleet.

The plan of operations upon which Louis XIV. and Charles had agreed was that the united French and English fleets should cover the disembarkation of troops on the coast of Holland as a diversion in favour of the attack of the main French army on the United Provinces. To this main army, accompanied by Louis himself and with Turenne and Condé at its head, an English contingent was attached under the command of Monmouth.

[1] Cal. S. P., Dom., 1672–1673 p. 609.

Coxe and Lediard and the majority of his biographies describe Churchill as accompanying Monmouth to France in the spring of 1672, but there is no evidence to connect him with any of the units of Monmouth's command[1] and in view of the known presence of his company of the King's Guards on James's flagship at Solebay and of his double promotion after that battle (*cf.* p. 43) the story of his presence with the French army during the campaign of 1672 seems highly improbable: certainly so long as James continued in command of the fleet Churchill would hardly have left his patron's side. Without more precise details as to his movements during this year absolute certainty is impossible but it seems established that it was at sea that Churchill saw service in 1672.

The point is the more important because of its bearing upon one of Churchill's most remarkable characteristics, his grasp of the peculiarities and difficulties of naval

[1] In the original compact this contingent was to have been six thousand strong but this figure seems to have been reached by the inclusion of the British regiments already in France, a list of which is given in the State Papers, France, in the Record Office (vol. 133). In addition to the Royal Scots (*cf.* p. 26) there were also in France of King Charles's subjects a regiment of horse under Sir Harry Jones (*cf. Hatton Correspondence*, i., 69, and S. P., Dom. Entry Book, 35A f. 29), an Irish infantry regiment of sixteen companies and an English one of half that strength, these being those commanded respectively by Sir George Hamilton and Lord Roscommon, which had been raised in the previous autumn (*cf.* S. P, Dom. Entry Book 24; and Ireland, Car. II., vol. cccxxx). To these was now added a "Royal English Regiment" of 2400 men of which Monmouth was Colonel, raised in the spring of 1672 partly by drafts from the existing regiments (*cf.* Hamilton's *History of the Grenadier Guards*, i., pp. 156–8). This regiment joined the French army at Arnheim in Holland in June, 1672, but there is no record of Churchill having been with it.

warfare. Few features of his conduct of the great struggle of the Spanish Succession are so noteworthy as his thorough appreciation of the capacities and limitations of sea-power. He possessed in no small measure that *sentiment exact des difficultés de la marine* which Napoleon never acquired and which so many other of the greatest generals have lacked. In 1708 Marlborough was pressing with all his might the urgent importance of securing Minorca, the ideal naval base in the Mediterranean which would allow the English fleet on that station to winter "up the Straits." He then laid it down definitely that the decision must rest with the naval men since of a technical naval question "they are the best judges."[1] "Operations at sea," he warned Wratislaw, the Emperor's minister, "are not so easily arranged as on land. There are many more precautions to be taken and you and I are not capable of forming a judgment about them." His early experience of naval warfare, an experience most uncommon among great generals, was sufficiently thorough to teach him the necessity of leaving technicalities to experts.[2] Moreover, for the first time he saw something of a problem to be only too familiar to him in years to come, that of conducting operations in which the forces of more than one nation are employed.

The naval campaign of 1672 was not without strategical lessons also. By great promptitude in putting to sea James evaded the Dutch attempt to shut him up in the Thames and to interpose their fleet between those of the Allies, individually weaker but stronger when combined than de Ruyter's command. Having effected his junc-

[1] Disp, iv., 118.

[2] V. infra p. 369.

tion with the French, James returned to the Eastward in hopes of bringing de Ruyter to action; the wary Dutchman, however, had refrained from following James too far down Channel lest the Allies should bring him to battle far away from the shoals and sand-banks of his own coast, so often the salvation of hard-pressed Dutch fleets, whose ships lighter in build and draught could retire into waters where their heavier opponents could not follow. He had blockaded the mouth of the Thames and was holding up the whole trade of London, but directly he got warning of the Allies' approach he slipped back to his favourite anchorage among the Walcheren shoals. But the Allies had a card to play. By proceeding to the Dogger Bank they could plant themselves on the usual path of homeward-bound Dutch convoys returning round the North of Scotland and if he would save the valuable East Indian fleet just due home de Ruyter must quit his vantage-ground off Walcheren and risk a battle. But James needed water and stores and so on May 21st/31st he put in to Solebay on the Suffolk coast where also he expected to find men to supplement his short-handed crews.

In Solebay then the Allies were lying, none too well prepared for battle, when on May 28th/June 8th the battle they were seeking came upon them sooner than they expected. The wind had gone to the Eastward and de Ruyter, as daring as he was prudent, snatched at the chance of catching his enemy unawares. In the desperate battle that followed the stress fell mainly on the Red squadron under James himself which formed the Allied centre. The French, probably misunderstanding the signal to stand out to sea on the starboard tack, went

off Southward on the other tack and the Dutch, detaching only a few vessels to deal with them, concentrated against the Allied centre, while the leading ships of the Allied van, Sandwich's Blue squadron, had to make a long beat to windward before they could work back to help their consorts. The Red squadron, hopelessly outnumbered, was very hard pressed. The fight raged fiercest round the *Prince* which was soon so crippled that James had to shift his flag to the *St. Michael*. At last, however, the unengaged division of the Blue squadron managed to get into action and its arrival changed the fortunes of the day. De Ruyter had to bear off: he had suffered heavier losses than he had inflicted, but the Dutch, if beaten back behind their banks, had the satisfaction of leaving their enemies so crippled that immediate action was beyond them: for the next few weeks at least no British troops would be disembarking on the coast of Holland. De Ruyter had given a brilliant example of offensive action by an inferior force whose main object was defensive.

Of Churchill's personal share in this hard-fought action little record remains. He had not been among the small party who accompanied James to the *St. Michael*,[1] and must have stayed with his men on the battered flagship. That he distinguished himself considerably may be gathered from the promotion which the battle brought him, not lieutenant's rank only but a captaincy in the Lord Admiral's Regiment (*cf.* p. 26) which had lost no less than four captains in the battle.[2] His personal connection with James probably influenced

[1] *Cf.* S. P., Dom., Car. II., vol. 310, No. 215.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. 311, No. 128, *cf.* Dalton, i., 127.

his promotion, but would not by itself account for the double step.[1]

The later events of the naval campaign were of minor importance. When at last the Allied fleet was sufficiently refitted to cross to the Dutch coast the situation of the United Provinces had been much improved, William of Orange was in power and the cutting of the dykes had stayed the French advance. Moreover, Solebay had shown de Ruyter's mettle and with such a foe "in being" the projected descent had to be abandoned. This, coupled with bad weather, the damages received at Solebay, and grave administrative difficulties, caused the fleet to be ordered into harbour for the winter as early as September 11th. Not long after the troops had been disembarked Churchill's company of the Lord Admiral's Regiment was placed under orders for France.

[1] *The Two Illustrious Generals* (p. 11) ascribes this promotion to Churchill's gallantry at the siege of Maastricht, which did not take place till 1673, an error which certainly discredits its authority.

CHAPTER III

UNDER TURENNE

SKELTON'S REGIMENT—THE SIEGE OF MAASTRICHT—IN COMMAND OF A BATTALION—TURENNE'S CAMPAIGN OF 1674—ENTZHEIM—TURCKHEIM—1675–1678.

CHURCHILL'S company was one of eight detailed from regiments already in existence for the British contingent in France. The companies, though formed into a battalion under a Guards' officer, Sir Bevil Skelton, were still reckoned as belonging to their regiments and so remained on their establishments, a most satisfactory thing to their officers to whom a place on the establishment was all-important. The battalion's formation was only ordered in November, but it was ready to cross overseas before the year ended and landed at Calais on December 27th, proceeding forthwith to winter-quarters at Arras and Douai. It had been originally intended that its companies should be incorporated in Monmouth's Royal English Regiment, eight companies of which had been reduced in October, but this plan was not carried out. Not only did Skelton's retain its independent formation but, in virtue of being commanded by a Guardsman and containing among its eight companies two from the King's Guards and one

[1] S. P. France, vol. 136, p. 21 (a letter from Louvois of January 13/23, 1673) and Hatton Correspondence, i., 98, which speaks of the companies which were being sent out as "to be joined to the Duke's in France."

from the Coldstream, it was by an order of March 1, 1673, given precedence over Monmouth's.[1]

Accurate details of the doings of these British units in the service of Louis XIV. are extremely hard to obtain, welcome though they would be to students of Marlborough's career for evidence about his military education. It was in his service with the French Army that he learnt his trade under the greatest masters of the day but, unfortunately for the present purpose, Churchill was not as yet of any particular consequence and the correspondence and news letters of the day are not on the watch for him and his doings. The operations of 1672 on the Continent had not gratified Louis XIV.'s ambitions for the complete destruction of Holland but they had so far favoured France as to awake alarm at several Courts which had at first watched inertly the preparation of Louis's designs. With the Emperor and Frederick William of Brandenburg taking up arms against France it had been necessary to detach Turenne to the Lower Rhine to prevent a junction between the Dutch and their new allies and to send troops to Alsace under Condé, among them Monmouth's Royal English Regiment whom it was thought inexpedient to employ in Holland.[2] Turenne had carried out his task successfully while Condé had kept Alsace clear of the enemy so that in 1673 the offensive against Holland could be continued. The first object before the main French army was the reduction of Maastricht, undertaken by Louis in person, and among those who accompanied the besieging force were Monmouth and

[1] *Cf.* F. W. Hamilton's *Grenadier Guards.*

[2] Verney MSS., p. 490.

Churchill. In what capacity the latter got to Maastricht is uncertain. His regiment had been left in garrison[1] and there is no evidence that even Monmouth's own regiment formed part of the besieging army, though the Duke himself was put in charge of a part of the siege-works.[2] Probably Churchill and other young men of quality accompanied the Duke as volunteers, for among the Englishmen present at the siege were Lord Alington, two sons of Lord Rockingham, the Marquis of Huntley, Mr. Villiers, son to Lord Grandison, and Sir Harry Jones, the Colonel of the English regiment of horse in Louis's service. With Sir Harry Jones came thirty picked troopers to act as a bodyguard to Monmouth,[3] the regiment itself being with the bulk of the French cavalry near Bois-le-Duc.[4]

But whatever brought him to Maastricht it was here Churchill first achieved distinction. On June 14th/24th a double attack was made upon the outworks, Monmouth having the right attack and being successful in capturing a half-moon in front of the Brussels gate. Conspicuous among the assailants was Churchill, the first to plant the French flag on the captured work, and prominent in securing the position won. Next day, just as the assailants were preparing to go to dinner, a sudden sortie by the besieged surprised the garrison of the captured outwork and the position was on the point of being lost when Monmouth and Churchill and a handful of Englishmen came dashing across the open from

[1] Hamilton, i., p. 173.

[2] *Cf.* Lockhart's letter from Maastricht of June 2nd/12th, S. P. France, vol. 137, p. 77.

[3] S. P. France, vol. 137, p. 142.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

the trenches. They had not waited, says Alington,[1] to leave the trenches by the ordinary sally-port but leapt straightway over the parapet and their promptitude saved the day. The besieged, as the Governor of Maastricht subsequently admitted,[2] were quite nonplussed by the sudden dash of this little party, its very smallness led them to suspect a trap and was partly responsible for Monmouth's success in maintaining the position until ample reinforcements arrived. This episode, hailed by "some old commanders" as "the bravest and briskest action they had seen in their lives,"[3] made a great impression and had no small effect in influencing the decision of the garrison whose surrender followed almost immediately. Churchill, who was wounded, seems to have saved Monmouth's life and his share in the exploit made his name well known in the besieging army. He is even said to have received the thanks of Louis in person and the King was certainly loud in his praises of the exploit and in rewarding it. Sir Harry Jones had been killed in the trenches before the sortie and Louis proceeded to bestow his regiment of horse upon Monmouth without waiting to be asked for this favour either by the Duke himself or by Charles.[4]

But while Churchill undoubtedly distinguished himself at Maastricht it is impossible to connect with this siege the well-known story which relates how after a French Colonel had "proved somewhat bashful and could not look a Dutch detachment in the face that possessed themselves of a certain pass he was ordered to

[1] S. P. France, vol. 137, p. 146.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 194. [3] Cf. *Two Illustrious Generals*, p. 11.
[4] *Cf.* Monmouth to Alington, June 18th/28th, S P France, 137, p. 147.

guard,"[1] Turenne wagered a supper and half-a-dozen of claret that his "handsome Englishman" would recover the post with half the force that lost it, whereupon Churchill by promptly accomplishing the task showed how well justified was Turenne's confidence. Turenne was never at Maastricht in 1673, being posted at Wetzlar in Westphalia to cover the siege. Coxe and Lediard ascribe the story to the capture of Nimuegen in 1672 at which Turenne was present, but this is incompatible with Churchill's presence at Solebay (*cf.* p. 40). But the story need not be rejected. There is ample evidence for the presence of the British contingent in Westphalia[2] and most likely Churchill and his regiment were dispatched thither and made the later part of the 1673 campaign under Turenne. In that case the "handsome Englishman" episode, a story which has been accepted as freely by French as by English writers, most likely occurred at this time.

[1] *Two Illustrious Generals*, p. 11.

[2] George Hamilton writes from Corbach in June and from Wetzlar in July (S. P. France, vol. 137, pp. 127 and 234), Douglas was a brigadier in Turenne's army in September (*ibid.*, vol. 138, p. 105), Monmouth's regiment was certainly with Turenne near Aschaffenburg in October (*ibid.*, vol. 138, p 125), and finally Lockhart, the English ambassador at Paris, speaks of the three companies of His Majesty's Guards (clearly the three with Skelton) as in winter-quarters at Wesel in March, 1674 (*ibid*, vol. 139, p. 73), they would never have been in such remote winter-quarters except after campaigning in that district. Moreover, William Perwych, an English agent at Paris, writing in July, 1673 (Dispatches of W. Perwych (Royal Historical Society), p. 263), relates that according to a gentleman just arrived from Turenne's army, Turenne "depends most upon the English troops, because the Germans pretend their great advantage to be in the foot." At this time the reputation of the French infantry was not nearly as high as that of their cavalry.

Whatever the truth as to 1673 there is no question as to Churchill's presence with Turenne in 1674. In that year's campaign Turenne displayed his powers both in tactics and in strategy at their highest and to have served such a campaign under him was for Churchill a great good fortune. Before the campaign opened, however, the political situation had undergone a change and Churchill himself had received an important step.

By the end of 1673 public opinion in England had become so definitely anti-French that the Parliament, far from voting further supplies for the war, was clamouring vigorously for the recall of Monmouth's men, and Charles, ever fearful lest an open breach with his subjects should send him on his travels again, found it well to withdraw from the war. By Spanish mediation peace was concluded on February 24, 1674. However, though it was agreed that no more recruiting for the British regiments in the French service should be allowed, those already there were not withdrawn. The contingent had been considerably reinforced during the winter, three newly raised regiments having been sent over to France together with drafts amounting in all to four thousand or five thousand men.[1] These, however, merely replenished the depleted ranks of the existing units and it was in this way that Churchill obtained his first command. It was decided to reduce Skelton's and to incorporate such of its men as did not return to England into Peterborough's, one of the three newly arrived units, and to give command of the bat-

[1] *Cf.* Williamson's Correspondence (Camden Society), vol. ii., pp. 11–21, and Le Fleming MSS., p. 104.

talion to Churchill.[1] At the age of twenty-four therefore John Churchill found himself in command of a battalion of infantry at the head of which he was to serve under the greatest soldier of the day in the most famous of all his campaigns.[2] No better training for a rising and ambitious young officer than a campaign under Turenne could have been desired. When France was reeling under the blows which Marlborough inflicted on her it may have given Frenchmen some melancholy satisfaction to reflect that the victorious enemy owed his professional training in no small measure to French teaching. Nor was it a lesser advantage to Marlborough in later years to be thoroughly at home with the methods and ideas of the French service. He owed his success very largely to his power of anticipating his

[1] Le Fleming MSS., p. 108, and S. P. France, vol. 139, p. 73. Lord Wolseley (i., 135) quotes an interesting correspondence about this appointment in which Louvois described Churchill as too much devoted to pleasure for his promotion; an accusation which may be partly discounted by Louvois's hostility to Turenne and anyone associated with him. However, backed by Charles II. and his brother, Churchill was successful in his request for the command which was gazetted on March 3/13, 1674, and a few days later Lockhart describes how he had been to Versailles "to present Colonel Churchill to His Majesty" and explain to Louis Charles's proposal for amalgamating Skelton's and Peterborough's (S. P. France, vol. 139, p. 73).

[2] It is worth noting that this appointment did not prejudice Churchill's position as captain of a company in the Duke of York's Regiment, that is to say on the permanent establishment. He and many other officers of Charles II.'s Army, the best known of them being Percy Kirke, served in France as colonels, or majors, or captains in the French service but retained their rank and places in their regiments, being in a position similar to that of the captains and subalterns of the Regular Army in 1914–1918 who commanded Service Battalions or even rose to loftier heights, but reverted to their permanent position on the reduction of the Army to its normal establishment.

adversaries and this was the easier for him since he had been trained in their school and was personally acquainted not only with their system and organization but with many of the men against whom he was to be matched. When he visited Tallard after Blenheim he expressed his regret that "this misfortune should have fallen on a general with whom he had the honour to be acquainted."[1] Moreover, Turenne's operations of 1674 had as their theatre a country to be more familiar to British soldiers thirty years later, when Marlborough must have profited by his knowledge of the Rhine valley.

Turenne's part in the campaign of 1674 was the difficult task of keeping at bay greatly superior forces while under cover of his operations Louis undertook the conquest of Franche-Comté and Condé adopted a vigorous offensive in Flanders. When exactly Churchill and his regiment joined Turenne is uncertain. Tradition, as represented by Coxe and the earlier biographers, describes Churchill as present at Sintzheim in the Neckar valley, when on June 6th/16th Turenne gained one of the most brilliant victories of his career. The daring of his strategy in crossing the Rhine and forcing an action on the most advanced detachment of the large hostile forces collecting for an attack on Alsace before the Imperialist Commander, the slow-moving Bournonville, could come to its aid is equalled by the daring and skill of his tactics.

[1] Portland MSS., iv, 114. He cannot have served with Vendôme, for he wrote to Eugene in 1708 for information about the opponent he was to meet (Disp., ii., 29, *cf.* p. 302), but Villars was certainly at the siege of Maastricht in 1673 (cf. Villars's *Memoirs*) and Churchill fought side by side with Boufflers in the hardest fight of the 1674 campaign, Entzheim.

He forced the passage of the river, secured a defile which gave access to the plateau on which the Imperialist main body was drawn up, and by dexterous use of guns, infantry, and cavalry in combination won a complete and brilliant victory. It is true that there is more than one close parallel between Turenne's tactics at Sintzheim and those by which Marlborough thirty years later secured an even greater triumph over Turenne's successors at Blenheim. It is also true that much of the credit for the victory was ascribed to the British infantry,[1] whose steady fire checked the Imperial cuirassiers at a critical moment, but while both Turenne's biographers, Ramsay and Raguenet, speak of Douglas's regiment as present and Ramsay (ii., 503) mentions detachments of Hamilton's and Monmouth's as included in a picked body of infantry drawn from regiments left in garrison in Alsace, Churchill's regiment did not furnish a detachment nor is its commander mentioned by either author. Lord Wolseley too, who speaks of Churchill as present, quotes no evidence in support of his statement. There is nothing but unreliable tradition in favour of Churchill's presence at Sintzheim and it seems at least likely that his regiment was part of a large reinforcement which joined Turenne near Philipsburg at the end of June.[2]

Whatever the truth as to Churchill and Sintzheim there is fortunately no doubt about his share in Turenne's next battle. Numerical inferiority prevented Turenne following up his success and in August Bournonville with thirty-five thousand men crossed the

[1] *Cf.* Raguenet, *Vie de Turenne*, pp. 259 and 268.

[2] Ramsay, ii, 509.

Rhine at Mayence. Alarmed for Lorraine, Louvois ordered Turenne to abandon his carefully-selected position in Northern Alsace between Landau and Weissenburg and to cross the Vosges into Lorraine. Turenne, however, realized that in this position he covered Lorraine indirectly and Alsace directly, since Bournonville dared not push on against Metz leaving him on his flank. He therefore disregarded Louvois's orders and the result justified him. Bournonville found himself checked; Turenne's position defied attack and the systematic devastation of the Palatinate already carried out prevented the Imperialists from subsisting in that quarter. However, they induced the citizens of Strassburg, hitherto neutral, to open their gates to them and suddenly crossing the Rhine marched up the right bank. Turenne, anticipating some such move, had arranged a plan for attacking Bournonville's rear-guard while his army was crossing, in which a prominent part had been assigned to Churchill and five hundred picked men. This scheme owing to the miscarriage of certain signals fell through,[1] but Churchill's selection for the enterprise shows that he had already established his reputation. Bournonville re-crossing the Rhine at Strassburg, September 15th/25th, took post just South West of that city at Entzheim. Here with his front covered by the Breusch he was between Turenne and his source of supplies in Upper Alsace. Moreover, eighteen thousand men under the Elector of Brandenburg on their way to reinforce Bournonville were close at hand. Once again Turenne's solution of his problem was a prompt attack. To wait would merely give the Elector time to arrive,

[1] *Cf.* Ramsay's *Turenne*, ii., p. 519.

so despite Bournonville's numerical superiority,[1] he set his troops in motion on the evening of September 22nd/October 2nd, and after a fifteen-mile march, found himself next day within striking distance of the Imperialists. Bournonville's outposts had been unenterprising and inefficient. Their failure to detect Turenne's move allowed him to secure the bridges over the Breusch which Bournonville had neglected to destroy, and to pass his army over to the Southern bank during the night. Thus on the morning of September 25th/October 4th, as soon as it was clear enough to see distinctly how the land lay, the French army advanced to attack the surprised Imperialists.[2]

The chief tactical feature of the battle-field of Entzheim was a wood which lay between the Imperialist left and the French right, known as the "Little Wood" to distinguish it from a larger wood which covered Bournonville's right. This "Little Wood" flanked the plain in which the main action must take place and its capture was an indispensable preliminary to the main attack. Boufflers with some dragoons was pushed forward to clear the wood but met with such stubborn opposition that infantry had to reinforce him. The Imperialists in turn reinforced their detachment and a most bitter struggle was soon raging for the "Little Wood." More and more battalions had to be thrown

[1] He had nineteen thousand horse to Turenne's ten thousand, and eighteen thousand foot against twelve thousand.

[2] In addition to a short letter from Churchill himself to Monmouth, given in full in the Calendar of State Papers for 1674–5 (p. 367), the State Papers contain a nine-page narrative by Duras, afterwards Lord Feversham, giving full details (*cf.* S. P. Dom. Car. II., vol. 361, No. 247) from which this account is mainly drawn.

into the fight for the wood, among them Dongan's battalion of Hamilton's Irish regiment, the third battalion of Monmouth's Royal English, and Churchill's own battalion. These, Feversham declares, "one and all assuredly accomplished marvels"; the Imperialists made repeated attacks only to be thrust out and though they pushed guns close up to their side of the wood they were driven from them. Turenne then pushed forward the cavalry of his right supporting them by four battalions, including another of Hamilton's, led by its Colonel in person. Unluckily just as this attack, largely through Hamilton's exceptional gallantry and leading, seemed on the point of complete success Hamilton fell desperately wounded, the troops whom his example had inspired were thrown into disorder and a counter-attack by Imperialist cavalry drove them right back. This check prevented the French right from pushing on against Entzheim, though the "Little Wood" was in the end mastered and Churchill and his men having, as he describes, beaten the enemy from a battery "at the head of the wood," taken the cannon and pushed the enemy's infantry back from the wood, advanced as far as "a very good ditch" from which also they beat the enemy. Thereupon "M. de Vaubrun, one of our Lieutenant-Generals, commanded us to guard that and advance no further." One reason for this check was that Bournonville had, at the height of the struggle for the "Little Wood," launched a cavalry charge against the French left and centre, which at first proved very successful. But at this crisis three squadrons of Monmouth's Horse delivered a most dashing and successful counter-stroke, drove back the Imperial cuirassiers and,

despite fearful losses, allowed other squadrons to complete the success by breaking and routing two Imperialist battalions. Simultaneously an attack on the infantry of the French centre, where were the two remaining battalions of Monmouth's, had been repulsed and another effort at outflanking the left had also failed. Thus, though it proved impracticable to push across the ravine which separated the "Little Wood" from Entzheim, the advantage remained with the French and after a desultory cannonade and exchange of musketry had been endured for some hours with unflinching steadiness by the troops who had cleared the wood the Imperialists decamped under the cover of night. Churchill wrote: "I durst not brag much of our victory but we have three of their cannon, several of their colours and some prisoners." The Imperialist losses considerably exceeded the heavy casualties which Turenne's army had suffered. The share of the British in the battle was made evident by the casualty list. Churchill himself had half his officers killed and wounded, both battalions of Hamilton's suffered heavily, the battalion of Monmouth's which had helped to take the "Little Wood" had eight officers killed or wounded and his Horse were reduced to a mere skeleton, their Lieutenant Colonel, Ferdinand Littleton, being killed with eight other officers while only four escaped unhurt.[1] Churchill himself was uninjured and Feversham wrote "no one in the world could possibly have done better than Mr. Churchill has done and M. de Turenne is very well pleased with all our nation." Indeed Turenne's official dispatch spoke most

[1] *Cf.* Bath MSS. (Hist. MSS. Comm., IVth Report) p. 238, and Verney MSS., p. 492.

favourably of Colonel Churchill and of his good service in bringing up his battalion to drive back the enemy whose counter-attack had penetrated into the wood.[1]

Ten days after Entzheim the Elector of Brandenburg arrived but though the Allies now greatly outnumbered Turenne, the effect of his vigorous offensive was seen in the caution his adversaries displayed. They managed by threatening the French magazines to manœuvre Turenne back towards Saverne but they dared not risk another battle and in November went into winter-quarters. On this Turenne withdrew into Lorraine where his troops found themselves exposed to considerable hardships from the weather and from lack of forage. On November 6th/16th Major Staniers of Monmouth's Foot wrote from Tuttweiler to Lockhart that Churchill's regiment was expected to be sent shortly into winter-quarters.[2] The enemy were already scattered throughout Alsace expecting nothing less than a resumption of hostilities. At Paris too the campaign was believed to be over for Duras and George Hamilton with other officers, though not Churchill, arrived at Paris on leave from Turenne's army before the end of November, and a letter of December 15th/25th relates that Churchill was daily expected there.[3] But though Turenne had just announced that within a few days his whole force would be in winter-quarters[4] he had more to ask of his men. His withdrawal into Lorraine only concealed a daring design.

Starting from near Haguenau on November 19th/29th and marching Southward behind the Vosges

[1] Disp., iv., 440.
[2] S. P. France, vol. 139, p. 144.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 145–174.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

which screened his movements completely from his adversaries Turenne was at Epinal by December 8th/18th, Churchill's regiment being then with him.[1] After a halt to provide supplies he moved on again; by the end of the year he had reached Belfort and debouching through the Belfort gap came down into the plains of Alsace where his enemy were lying dispersed and in fancied security. The Allies made a hasty effort to concentrate near Colmar but they had not collected more than half their force at Turckheim before Turenne, cutting up several detachments on the way, fell on them (December 25th/January 5th) and defeated them. A turning movement through rough country on his left, covered by a demonstration against the hostile front, enabled Turenne to capture the village of Turckheim but only after a sharp struggle in which the British infantry distinguished themselves by their effective musketry at the crisis of the battle[2] and gained much honour.[3]

Turckheim, unlike Entzheim, had decisive results.[4] The Elector of Brandenburg and his colleagues hast-

[1] S. P. France, vol. 139, p. 172.

[2] *Cf.* Raguenet, pp. 311 ff.

[3] News Letters, France.

[4] These operations are narrated in two letters of January 7, 1675 (N. S.) (S. P. News Letters, France, vol. xviii); these do not mention Churchill's battalion but it had certainly been with Turenne at Epinal, and while the News Letters state that two battalions of Douglas's had been left in garrison at Haguenau (letter of December 21, 1674) and that another was at Breisach (letter of December 29) there is no mention of Monmouth's or Churchill's as sent into garrison. Deschamps (*Les Deux Dernières Campagnes de M. de Turenne*) only speaks of Hamilton's as present, but his silence is not conclusive against the presence of Churchill's as he never mentions Monmouth's, whose Major, Staniers, wrote one of the letters of January 7th. In default of definite information it seems probable that Churchill and his battalion shared in the laurels of Turckheim.

ened to evacuate Upper Alsace and to put the Rhine between them and Turenne. Upon this the French and their auxiliaries went into winter-quarters, the British being mostly quartered at Metz and other places in Lorraine.[1] Thus ended the most dramatic and remarkable of all Turenne's campaigns and the most valuable and important of Churchill's early experiences. He had seen how promptitude, activity, and mobility can largely compensate for numerical inferiority. He had seen how a vigorous offensive is often the shortest road to safety in unfavourable circumstances, how such a mistake as Bournonville's failure to make full use of the obstacle formed by the Breusch could be turned to account. he had learnt tactical and strategical lessons in the choice of positions and in the selection of tactical features for attack and defence, and he had given proofs of his own capacity and gallantry. It was possibly in recognition of his good services that on January 5/15, 1675, he was promoted to be Lieutenant-Colonel of the Duke of York's Regiment.[2]

To trace with any accuracy the movements of Colonel Churchill in the years 1675, 1676, and 1677 is unfortunately impossible. Coxe and Lord Wolseley state that he continued to serve with the British contingent in the French service, but what authentic evidence is available tells mostly against this view. Such glimpses of him as the State Papers afford show that he can hardly

[1] *Cf.* S. P., Dom., Car. II., for various letters of Monmouth relating to the pay, promotions, and recruiting of the contingent: there is one of November 2nd to Churchill, congratulating him on his services at Entzheim and approving all his suggestions for filling vacancies, since Churchill is "the best judge of everyone's deservings."

[2] *Cf.* Dalton, i., p. 180.

have been with Turenne on the Rhine when on July 17/27, 1675, that great commander's career was closed by a chance shot as he was reconnoitring the very unfavourable position into which he had manœuvred his old opponent Montecuculi, while the news letters and other accounts from France never mention him as present in any of the many actions in which the British troops continued to distinguish themselves.[1]

But while the British contingent in the French service was steadily adding to its laurels, a great change was coming over public feeling in England. The rising tide of hostility to France was too much for Charles. The marriage of his niece Mary to William of Orange in November, 1677, showed clearly how things were going and was a victory for Temple and Danby, both strong advocates of a Dutch alliance. This was followed up in January, 1678, by the recall, many times demanded but until now steadily refused, of those of Charles's subjects still in the French service. At the end of that month Parliament assembled, to be met by Charles with an announcement that he had formed an alliance with Holland to protect Flanders against French aggression and therefore required liberal grants to equip the forces needed by sea and land to support this new policy. Parliament responded promptly with a vote sufficient to allow of the expansion of the Army to thirty thousand men.[2] This change of front opened new opportunities to Churchill. On February 18th/28th he was appointed Colonel of one of the new regiments of foot for whose formation orders had been issued, the commission being post-dated by one day in order to bring him below

[1] *Cf.* Appendix A.

[2] *Cf.* Cal. S. P., Dom., 1677–1678, p. 632.

George Legge.[1] But the Army Lists and Commission Registers' record no other appointments to this regiment and it is most unlikely that it ever came into existence; certainly Churchill himself was much too busy with other work to have had time to go recruiting; possibly the colonelcy was merely given him to secure him precedence and pay equivalent to the very important work he was now called upon to discharge. All the spring and summer he was continually going to and fro to Flanders on highly confidential missions in connection with the negotiations and with the employment of the British contingent, the first instalments of which, drawn from the Guards, the Buffs, and the Lord Admiral's Regiment, had crossed to Ostend early in March and were soon in occupation of Bruges also.[2]

That Churchill was no mere messenger but a fully accredited agent is clear from the Duke of York's letters to William of Orange. Writing in April of the necessity of re-enforcing the English troops at Bruges, then threatened with an attack by greatly superior forces, James speaks of them as "four battalions of our old regiments which we have no mind to lose," and adds: "Churchill will speak to you more at large about it."[3]

The chief interest of these missions is that they brought Churchill for the first time into close contact with William of Orange. But while Danby was most anxious for active intervention, and James himself genuinely desired a vigorous prosecution of the war[4] Charles had other views. He could not oppose the

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 44, and *cf.* Dalton, vol. i. [2] *Cf.* Cal. S. P., Dom., 1678.
[3] *Cf.* S. P., Dom., King William's Chest, vol. iii., No. 30.
[4] *Ibid.*, i., 15, and iii., 33.

powerful current of anti-French feeling, but he had no wish to hinder the resumption of friendly relations, to say nothing of cash payments, between himself and his cousin at Versailles. This attitude of the King's did not escape the acute observation of Churchill as his letter of September 3rd/13th to his wife clearly shows,[1] but though in May Louis concluded a secret treaty with Charles II., by which the latter promised for the usual consideration in cash neutrality in case the Dutch failed to accept the terms offered by Louis at Nimuegen, this did not stop the raising of new troops and the gradual increase of the force in Flanders.

Indeed the French negotiators at Nimuegen showed themselves so obstructive over restoring towns to the Spaniards in Flanders that James wrote to William on June 24th/July 4th that if the Dutch would do their part the King was prepared to stick to them,[2] and at the beginning of August Monmouth drew out of the garrisons in Flanders some eight British battalions to reinforce William's army in the field. Monmouth himself, pushing on ahead of his troops, actually arrived in time to distinguish himself in William's attack on the French camp at St. Denis near Mons (August 4th/14th)[3] but the only British engaged in this battle were the six battalions under Lord Ossory already in the Dutch service.[4] Churchill therefore, though a letter of his

[1] *Cf.* Wolseley, i., 213. [2] King William's Chest, vol. iii., No. 44.

[3] S. P., Dom., lii., p. 63.

[4] These units, now represented in the British Army by the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Royal Warwickshires, formerly the 5th and 6th Foot, and less directly by the 2nd Connaught Rangers, the old 94th Foot, who have a connexion with the Scottish battalions under Ossory, distinguished themselves greatly in this battle and lost heavily.

to Charles Littleton, the Colonel of the Duke of York's Regiment of which he was still Lieutenant-Colonel, expresses great anxiety to join the forces in the field,[1] did not miss much. Finally in September he received the coveted orders to proceed to Flanders and take command of the First Brigade of the contingent under Monmouth.[2]

However, though Churchill hastened out at once to Flanders, he had barely arrived when the conclusion of the Peace of Nimuegen put an end to hostilities and all chance of gaining distinction. On the return home early in 1679 of the British contingent, the newly raised units were forthwith disbanded, the Lord Admiral's Regiment, in which Churchill retained his old position being among the few corps to escape this fate.

The Peace of Nimuegen ends the first phase of Churchill's career. Not yet thirty years of age he had made a name as a promising soldier and a man of distinguished courage. He had gained valuable experience, both of future allies and opponents, as well as of theatres of war which he was to revisit in years to come. He had shown capacity for command and some aptitude for diplomatic missions. But as yet nothing distinguished him much from other soldier-courtiers; though closely connected with the Duke of York he was not yet linked with him in the intimate association which

[1] *Cf.* Hatherton MSS., p. 296, July 12th/22nd.

[2] This brigade included a battalion of the King's Guards, another of the Coldstream, one of the Holland Regiment (now the Buffs), and two newly raised regiments, those of Her Royal Highness and Colonel Legge; this last was assigned to Sir John Fenwick's brigade, but at Legge's special request his battalion was transferred to Churchill's. Entry Book xli, p. 162.

was to mark the last few years of Charles II.'s reign, and to make Churchill's attitude towards his master's projects a matter of serious public importance.

APPENDIX A

CHURCHILL'S MOVEMENTS IN 1675–1677

The only evidence for Churchill's presence with the French army after the Turckheim operations is a letter from a French lady written in 1711 and quoted by Lord Wolseley, which describes how thirty-four years earlier (*i. e.*, in 1677) Churchill had prevented her lands near Metz from being ravaged. After such an interval the lady's accuracy may not be beyond suspicion and though Churchill's regiment wintered near Metz in 1674–75,[1] the unimpeachable evidence is all against his having served in any of the later campaigns, especially as in May, 1675, his regiment in the French service had been reduced and incorporated in Monmouth's Royal English Regiment.[2] He himself appears to have been at home at the time, as a letter of April, 1675, in Sir W. Fitzherbert's MSS.[3] declares that the writer has been sure these three months that Churchill would not come out again.

An entry of August 17/27, 1675,[4] shows that Churchill was crossing from Rye to Dieppe on that date and Sarsfield, one of the King's agents in Paris, announces Churchill's arrival at the French capital three days later, he "having pushed on in great haste and left the rest of his party behind him at Rouen."[5] These entries are almost conclusive against his presence at Turenne's death, especially as the News Letters of the period, though giving many details of the good services of Monmouth's and Hamilton's in covering the French retreat over the Rhine and mentioning many officers by name, never allude to Churchill.[6] His presence in London in September, 1676, is proved by his serving on the Court-martial which tried Lieutenant Morris of the Duke of York's Regiment for an assault on the Governor of Plymouth.[7] Further there is a record

[1] S. P. France and Entry Books.

[2] *Cf.* S. P., Dom., Car. II., Entry Book xli, pp. 33–36.

[3] Hist. MSS. Comm., p. 102.

[4] *Cf.* S. P., Dom., Car. II., vol. 372, p. 209.

[5] S. P., Foreign, France, vol. 140, p. 155.

[6] *Cf.* S. P., Foreign, News Letters (France), vol. xviii.

[7] S. P., Dom., Car. II., vol. 385, No. 179.

in October, 1675, of permission to Colonel Churchill to import from France free from duty certain articles of silver plate which formed part of his "equipage"; this looks as if he had no further occasion to keep any equipage in France.[1] Another entry ordering the payment to Churchill of £250 out of the contingent money then in Monmouth's hands[2] this being "for His Majesty's special service," rather suggests as if he was already being employed on diplomatic work. In the autumn of 1676 the Lieutenant-Colonelcy of Monmouth's Royal English Regiment falling vacant, Monmouth and James united in seeking the post for Churchill (*cf.* Wolseley, i., 147) but the vacancy was finally allotted to Justin MacCartie[3] subsequently created Viscount Mount Cashel and best known for his defeat by the Enniskilleners at Newton Butler. On Hamilton's death his regiment was given to Thomas Dongan and as the Royal Scots continued throughout to be commanded by George Douglas, and the vacancy in Monmouth's Horse had gone to Major Lanier, it is difficult to see in what capacity Churchill could have served in France in these years.

[1] *Cf.* Calendar of Treasury Books, 1673–1675.
[2] S. P., Dom , Entry Book xxvi, f. 213.
[3] *Cf.* S. P., Dom., Entry Book, p. 41.

CHAPTER IV

UNDER JAMES II.

MARRIAGE—IN THE DUKE OF YORK'S HOUSEHOLD—MONMOUTH'S REBELLION—SEDGEMOOR.

CHURCHILL, whatever his military activities after 1674, had during this period retained his position in the Duke of York's household. It was thus that he met the woman who was to affect his career so profoundly. Sarah Jennings was one of the three beautiful daughters of a Hertfordshire gentleman of good family, otherwise quite inconspicuous. Born in 1660 she was five years older than the Duke of York's younger daughter with whom she came into contact at an early age. Frances, the eldest of the Jennings sisters, was Maid of Honour to the Duchess of York and Sarah was a frequent visitor to the Court. The friendship which sprang up between her and Anne was not interrupted by the Duchess's death (April, 1671), and on James's second marriage (December, 1673) Sarah was appointed Maid of Honour to the new Duchess.

Accustomed from childhood to the atmosphere of a Court distinguished for freedom from all restraint and scruple, Sarah Jennings grew up under unfavourable circumstances. Yet, bitterly as she was hated for her greed, her lack of tact, her ambition and her temper, no scandalmongers ever managed to besmirch her reputation, and her devotion to her husband is the redeeming feature in a disposition which did almost as much to

wreck her husband's career as her ascendancy over Anne contributed to his advancement. This passionate and ungovernable temper Sarah seems to have inherited from her mother, daughter of Sir Gifford Thornhurst, a Kentish baronet. By birth she belonged, like her future husband, to a family of good standing though neither wealthy nor actually noble. Her beauty, vivacity and wit made her prominent at Court but she was hardly the wife whom a young and brilliant soldier, coming from an impoverished county family, might have been expected to marry. Her parents also, naturally expecting their beautiful daughter to make a good match, were horrified at the idea of her throwing herself away on a penniless if promising young officer. The marriage was clearly one of affection and if Marlborough was to have reason to regret his wife's imperious and intractable temper the deep devotion which inspired them throughout is one of the best features in their lives. Before marriage Churchill had lived the life of his contemporaries; when he met his wife he enjoyed the reputation of being the lover of the Duchess of Cleveland; after marriage he became almost notorious for his fidelity to his wife. The accusations of selfishness, treachery, greed, and inordinate ambition, so freely levelled against Marlborough, are not wholly without foundation, but the portrait of a monster of baseness and unscrupulousness which his enemies have drawn is not easily reconciled with the picture of unfaltering devotion to a wayward termagant which Marlborough's relations with his wife presents. There is indeed a story that Churchill for some time contemplated jilting Sarah Jennings to marry his wealthy but

unbeautiful cousin Catherine Sedley,[1] and it is certain that Sarah wrote to him in angry terms, declaring the engagement at an end and bidding him confess himself "the falsest creature on earth," but in the end worldly considerations and parental disapproval were set aside and the lovers were married. The exact date of the wedding is unknown, apparently it took place in secret in the winter of 1677–1678.[2] The Duchess of York was one of the few people in the secret and letters preserved at Blenheim show that her help was most valuable. By the spring of 1678 the marriage must have been public property, for Churchill and his wife were then with his parents at Mintern, where they continued to live for some years. It was partly poverty and partly a desire to keep his wife at a distance from the Court which caused Churchill to adopt this plan, and though his official duties required his presence at Court from time to time, he used to leave his wife in Dorsetshire. Up to the end of the Franco-Dutch war of 1672–1678 Churchill had taken no part in politics, but in the stormy period which culminated in the "Popish Plot" and the Exclusion Bill as a prominent follower of the Roman Catholic heir to the throne he became inevitably involved in political affairs. When, as the upshot of the Popish Plot agitation, Charles had to direct his brother to leave the kingdom, Colonel Churchill and his wife were among the slender following who accompanied the Duke to Brussels in March, 1679. But though the Churchills shared James's exile they were far from

[1] Afterwards mistress of James II., and created Countess of Dorchester in 1686.

[2] *Cf.* Wolseley, i., 195.

sharing the creed which had caused his banishment, and they and the Princess Anne were allowed to have religious services according to the rites of the Church of England. Personally averse to persecution for conscience' sake, Churchill was content to treat his master's religion as a purely private matter and to trust his repeated promises not to interfere with the Church of England as established at the Restoration. To that Church both Churchill and his wife were deeply devoted with an attachment whose genuineness there is no reason whatever to doubt, and Sarah's influence over Anne, by this time well established, played its part in keeping that Princess true to the Protestant faith.

During the six months of James's residence in Brussels Churchill was frequently employed in confidential missions to London, such as carrying to the King requests from his brother for permission to return home.[1] James, if not actually aware of the designs of his enemies, suspected that in case of the King's sudden death, and Charles's health was certainly precarious, the Protestant leaders would profit by his absence and proclaim Monmouth King: in exile he felt at a great disadvantage. Public opinion, however, would not tolerate the presence in England of the unpopular heir presumptive and the Duke had to console himself with permission to transfer his residence to Scotland. Churchill accordingly accompanied him to Scotland (October, 1679), but left his wife in London for her first confinement. This took place in November, but the child, a girl, died in infancy.

In Scotland James remained for over two years,

[1] *Cf.* Dartmouth MSS., i., 33–37.

broken by a few months in England in the spring and summer of 1680, a stay cut short by the approach of the meeting of Parliament. Of Churchill's activities in this period a few glimpses are to be found. In January, 1681, he writes to Colonel Legge, recently appointed Master of the Ordnance, urging upon him the wisdom of taking the opportunity, now that he had obtained good employment, of so ordering his affairs that "by living within yourself," his estate might be cleared; to fail in this, Churchill urges, would be unjust to Legge's family, and he adds, "when we meet you must expect me to be troblesome if I find that you prefer your own living to your children's good."[1] The letter is worth mention in view of the charges of avarice against Churchill; it is not that of a miser or an avaricious man but of one prudent in money matters in an age when that quality was neither general nor popular. His name is frequently mentioned as likely to obtain other employment, now as Governor of Sheerness, now as to get command of the Lord Admiral's Regiment,[2] now as to be Ambassador at Paris. Barillon states that William of Orange wanted Churchill as Ambassador at The Hague, despite his inexperience in public affairs.[3] However, while James would have let Churchill go, either to Holland or to Paris, if he himself were with the King, he wrote to Laurence Hyde, "so long as I am from him [Charles II.] I would not willingly have Churchill from me."[4] Yet, though Churchill had evidently made himself most useful to his master[5] he

[1] Dartmouth MSS., i., 56.
[2] Hatton Corespondence, i., 266.
[3] *Cf.* Wolseley.
[4] Clarendon Correspondence, i., 51.
[5] *Cf.* Dartmouth MSS., i., 45.

does not appear even now as active in political affairs. That he was opposed to the Exclusion Bill is clear, but he declined a seat in Parliament: his connexion with his master remained personal rather than political and he steadfastly declined to change his religion.

With the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament (March, 1681) Charles found his position much improved. His astuteness in letting his enemies proceed to extremes had given time and opportunity for the inevitable reaction against the Whigs. With the Tories rallying to him, with the "non-resistance" doctrines of Filmer and his school making steady progress, Charles was able in the spring of 1682 to recall the impatient James from Scotland. James therefore after a preliminary visit to the Court embarked at Margate in H. M. S. *Gloucester* on May 4th/14th to fetch his household back to London. On the way North the frigate struck on a shoal near the mouth of the Humber and speedily became a total wreck. Only a little was wanting to make the wreck of the *Gloucester* as memorable in English history as that of the *White Ship* over five centuries earlier. Passengers and crew were soon in a panic, all discipline was lost, and had not Churchill with drawn sword forcibly prevented the terror-stricken mob from jumping into a boat which Colonel Legge brought round to the window of James's cabin the boat must have been swamped, and James would probably have shared the fate of over half the ship's company who were drowned. Churchill himself was taken off in the Duke's boat, but Laurence Hyde, James's brother-in-law, and several other persons of importance perished.

By midsummer of 1682 James and his household

were safely established at St. James's Palace and here Churchill continued for the remainder of Charles's reign. As before he was frequently employed on public and private business by his master, now virtual ruler of the kingdom. He was sent to escort over from Denmark Prince George, the husband chosen for Princess Anne (July, 1683), and though a rumour that Churchill was to be Secretary of State proved to have no stronger foundation than that he was taking lessons in writing,[1] it does indicate that his influence over the Duke of York was well known. A letter in the Belvoir MSS. (ii., 81) gives a glimpse of other activities in describing how the King is in good health and "playing much at tennis," his companions being Feversham, Godolphin, and Churchill, "all so excellent players that if one beats the other 'tis alternately." In February, 1681, he had given up the Lieutenant-Colonelcy of the Lord Admiral's Regiment to Oliver Nicholas but in November, 1683, he received command of the King's Own Royal Regiment of Dragoons,[2] on that regiment being withdrawn from Tangier. In December, 1682, a more substantial reward was given him as he was created Baron Aymouth in the peerage of Scotland while his wife was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Anne, an office whose emoluments appreciably increased the meagre resources of the family and gave Sarah ample opportunity to confirm her already established influence over Anne.

With James's accession Churchill's importance was much increased: closely identified with the new mon-

[1] Sir F. Graham's MSS., p. 363.

[2] Dalton, i., 301, *cf.* S. P., Dom., Entry Books, 1679–1687.

arch in his exile he naturally benefited by his master's altered position and within three months was called to the House of Lords as Baron Churchill of Sandridge in the county of Herts. The special service thus recognized was a mission to notify to Louis XIV. the death of Charles and the accession of James. But while this was the official object of the mission Churchill had further orders of a more secret character. James was well aware of the unpopularity of his projects, the restoration of Roman Catholicism and the establishment of absolutism, and knew that the Parliament which financial necessities would drive him to summon would not hesitate to employ against him its lever of financial control. He wished therefore to establish relations with his brother's old paymaster, and although reluctant to ask Louis outright for money was not averse to intimating his readiness to receive subsidies. Churchill's instructions did not actually include a request for money but his business was more than merely formal. How far he was in James's confidence it is impossible to say. Burnet[1] relates that about this time Churchill actually said to Lord Galway: "If the King should attempt to change our religion I will instantly quit his service," but thus early in the reign there were no solid reasons for expecting an attack on the Protestant religion as by law established. True James attended Mass in full state on the Sunday after his accession, but there is no need to question the sincerity and patriotism of those who were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt. Till some definite overt act was committed it was possible to believe that the liberties and religion of the

[1] Vol. iii., p. 216.

country would be safe with James. And there was no alternative sovereign. Even in 1689 the country found it hard enough to arrange a method of getting rid of James, impossible as his retention of the royal authority was then admitted to be. In 1685 no one would have dreamt of substituting William and Mary for James, and the attitude of the country during Monmouth's rebellion shows that until his openly avowed attempts on their liberties and religion drove his subjects into revolt, James was secure enough on the throne.

The rising of the ill-fated Monmouth is important in Marlborough's biography because its suppression gave Churchill his first chance in independent command. Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis on June 11, 1685,[1] and two days later the news reached London. Orders were at once issued to the Lord-Lieutenants of the Western counties to call out their Militia, the six British regiments in the Dutch service were recalled from Holland and all Regular troops available were ordered to march forthwith for Salisbury. The command of these troops was entrusted to Churchill, who was given the rank of Brigadier.[2] The force at his disposal was meagre enough, four troops of Oxford's Horse (now the Blues), four of his own regiment, the King's Dragoons, five companies of the Queen Dowager's Regiment of foot (now the Queen's Regiment). At the head of this tiny column Churchill quitted London on June 15th, and leaving the infantry to follow as best they could, pressed on so fast with the mounted troops that on the evening of June 17th he reached Bridport. The first

[1] Dates in this chapter are all O. S.

[2] *Cf.* Northumberland MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., VIIth Report, p. 97.

action of the campaign had already taken place and had shown clearly that the suppression of the rebellion would have to be accomplished by the Regulars, for when on June 15th the Duke of Albemarle moved from Chard to Axminster with the Militia of Devon and Somerset his raw levies, whose sympathies were rather with their opponents than for the King, refused to fight on finding the insurgents ready for battle and dispersed in disorder the moment a retreat was begun. Monmouth, his ranks recruited from his late opponents, pushed on unopposed to Taunton which he entered on June 18th. In front of him there were but untrustworthy Militia,[1] those of Gloucestershire, Hereford and Monmouth holding Bristol, those of Somerset at Bath, with the Wiltshiremen moving up by Devizes to Chippenham, those of Oxford and Berks collecting at Reading, those of Surrey and Hampshire mustering at Farnham and Salisbury.[2] But in Churchill and his little force Monmouth had very different opponents. Weary though his troopers were,[3] Churchill pushed out parties in all directions, promptly establishing touch with the main body of the insurgents, which he located at Taunton and checking the disposition of the country folk to join Monmouth. Well aware of the enormous importance of adequate transport he was indefatigable in collecting for the King's service every animal and every vehicle on which he could lay his hands. On June 18th

[1] The Duke of Beaufort wrote to the Duke of Somerset advising him to join Churchill as soon as possible, as the Militia were not to be relied upon (Northumberland MSS., p. 97.)

[2] Cf. *Iter Bellicosum*, Camden Miscellany, vol. xii., pp. 151–168.

[3] Stopford Sackville MSS., p. 2.

he moved to Axminster, on the 20th he pushed on to Chard, from which place he wrote to the Duke of Somerset who was then endeavouring to secure the line of the Avon, "I shall join you by following the Duke of Monmouth so close as I can in his marches, which I think is the only way for me to join you or to do the King service: but I think that you should press the Duke of Albemarle to join you for he has a good force of men and is not so well able to attend the Duke of Monmouth's march as I am by reason of the King's Horse which is with me."[1]

Meanwhile James had appointed as Commander-in-Chief Feversham, a Huguenot refugee who had been naturalized and had been created Earl of Feversham in 1677. Feversham was Turenne's nephew but showed no spark of his uncle's military talents. Lethargic and careless he was pronounced both indolent and gluttonous by his officers and it was not to Feversham but to the officer he had superseded that James owed the speedy suppression of the rebellion. The motive for Churchill's supersession, which at the time he felt bitterly, is not clear,[2] Feversham's reputation as a soldier was not so high as Churchill's, both men were notorious as adherents of the King but as sturdy Protestants. That some faint suspicion of Churchill's loyalty was already passing through James's mind seems incredible. For the moment Churchill was fully occupied in keeping touch with Monmouth and impeding his advance from Taunton to Bridgewater and thence

[1] Northumberland MSS., p. 97.

[2] *Cf.* Churchill to Clarendon, July 4th, Clarendon Correspondence, i., p. 141.

to Shepton Mallet by way of Glastonbury. On June 21st he wrote to the Duke of Somerset from Chard announcing his intention to be at Langport next day and to "press the rebels as close as ever I can." If his harassing attentions were not the only factor in causing the insurgents to waste time and throw away their best chances it is clear that they were a serious handicap to Monmouth. A prompt movement upon Bristol, only seventy miles from the Duke's landing place, might have given him that important city and the control of the passages over the Avon long before Feversham, who had left London on June 20th with the main body of the King's troops, could arrive. But Monmouth, shaping his course partly with the idea of gathering recruits, partly to avoid Churchill, had moved too far to the West and when, late on June 24th, an advanced detachment of his troops reached the Avon at Keynsham below Bath he was already too late. Feversham's column had reached Marlborough on the previous evening: he himself had already visited Bristol and given instructions for the destruction of the bridge at Keynsham, while the Wiltshire Militia had reached Bath and secured that bridge.[1] A party of Feversham's cavalry under Colonel Oglethorpe had located the rebel main body at Shepton Mallet, seventeen miles from Keynsham, on June 23rd and Feversham had received news that Churchill had had a sharp and successful encounter with Monmouth's cavalry at Langport on the previous evening.[2]

Monmouth's main body had just reached Keynsham on the morning of June 25th and were beginning to cross

[1] Cf. *Iter Bellicosum*, p. 160. [2] *Cf.* Stopford Sackville MSS., p. 4.

the bridge, which his advanced party had restored, when Oglethorpe, arriving suddenly from the Eastward with a troop of the Blues and some mounted militiamen came charging in upon them. This attack was beaten off but it so dispirited and alarmed the insurgent leader that he decided to abandon the attempt to cross the Avon. Oglethorpe, who really came from Bath, was believed by Monmouth to belong to the vigilant little force under Churchill by whom he had been so persistently followed and harassed. So great an impression had his old subordinate's activity made upon Monmouth that he rejected the proposal to push forward to Gloucester in the hope of passing the Severn there, on the ground that the Royal cavalry would be certain to so delay his movements that Feversham's infantry would be able to overtake him and bring him to battle before he could reach Gloucester. A night march on Bath which brought the insurgents before its gates at daybreak on June 26th proved unavailing: they were met with a refusal to surrender. Accordingly Monmouth turned away Southward with Churchill's cavalry pressing hard on his heels and cutting off stragglers; he halted that night at Philip's Norton dejected and despondent. During the day the concentration of the Royal forces was effected by the arrival at Bath of Feversham's infantry.

The concentration effected, all that remained was to bring the rebels to action forthwith, but Feversham's conduct of the operations contrasted unfavourably with Churchill's vigour and enterprise. Far from forcing on an action he allowed the rebels to get clear away, lost touch with them and wasted several days in inactivity.

Luckily Monmouth, who was already despairing of his undertaking, proved quite incapable of profiting by Feversham's slackness or this failure to press the rebels closely might have proved serious. As long as the insurgents were unsubdued there was always a danger that the rebellion might spread and with practically all the Regulars in the kingdom toiling slowly through Somerset lanes in attendance on Monmouth there were no troops available should the standard of revolt be raised elsewhere. Distrust of his militiamen and the necessity of waiting for his guns have been alleged as excuses for Feversham, but his lethargy was an object-lesson to his impatient subordinate who since the union of the Royal forces had had little to do save to see what opportunities Feversham was letting slip. He wrote to his wife from Frome[1]: "We have abundance of rain which has very much tired our soldiers, which I think is ill, because it makes us not press the Duke of Monmouth as I think he should be." To Clarendon he wrote more bitterly: "I see plainly that the trouble is mine and that the honor will be another's." What he feared was that Monmouth, who was scouring the country for horses, would leave his foot entrenched at Bridgewater and "break away with his horse to some other place." He was not taken into Feversham's confidence, and his letter to Clarendon breathes a spirit of dissatisfaction and almost of distrust of his position: "I am afraid," he wrote, "of giving my opinion freely, for fear that it should not agree with that which is the King's intentions and so only expose myself."

On the evening of July 5th Feversham halted for the

[1] June 30th, *cf.* Wolseley, i., 304.

night near the village of Weston Zoyland on Sedgemoor within three miles of the rebel position at Bridgewater.[1] The position of the Royal forces was covered by a broad ditch, the so-called Bussex Rhine, which swept round their camp in a semi-circle, covering it on the North and West. Feversham had had notice that the rebels were likely to make a move,[2] and was quite on the alert, pushing out parties of horse to observe their movements and it is clear that, though those on guard may have been lacking in vigilance and though the evidence for the disorderly condition of the Royal camp cannot be wholly set aside, the picture of their unpreparedness and negligence which Macaulay has made so familiar is much exaggerated. Feversham himself may have been caught in his bed but he, or possibly his second in command, had taken ample precautions against surprise.

It seems to have been on a report of drunkenness and disorder in the Royal camp that Monmouth was led to the desperate venture of a night attack. With less than four thousand raw levies it was indeed a forlorn hope to attempt the most difficult of all operations, a night march followed by an attack in darkness, against an equal, if not superior, force. Monmouth, however, though well aware of the danger of tackling the veterans of Dumbarton's and Kirke's, knew that over a third of Feversham's force consisted of raw and exhausted Militia on whom he placed but little reliance,[3]

[1] For fuller details of the operations since Feversham took command it is hardly necessary to refer to Macaulay: Lord Wolseley (i., pp. 269–338) has also related them in detail.

[2] Portland MSS., ii., 158.

[3] *Cf.* Stopford Sackville MSS., p. 11, and *Iter Bellicosum*, p. 162.

and his desperate situation made him grasp at any chance. Actually before Farmer Godfrey brought in his story that the Royalists were in a condition to facilitate surprise, Monmouth had been contemplating the move that Churchill anticipated, to slip away in the darkness and marching North-Eastward by Keynsham and Gloucester make for Cheshire where he expected help.

The story of Monmouth's night march, of the loss of direction due to the necessity of avoiding the Royalist outpost at Chedzoy on the direct line across the moor from Bridgewater, of the delay in finding the passage over the Langmoor Rhine, of the confusion when the rebel column found itself pulled up short by the unexpected obstacle of the Bussex Rhine, illustrates forcibly the difficulties of his undertaking, just as that of the gallant resistance of his infantry against the skilfully directed Regulars whom they had to face is to the credit of the devoted Somerset peasantry. In the overthrow of the rebels Churchill played a leading part. When the rebels were checked by the Bussex Rhine they opened a heavy fire of musketry against the Royal infantry who were drawn up on the far side of the ditch, Dumbarton's (Royal Scots) on the right, then the Guards, then Kirke's (Queen's) with Trelawny's (King's Own) on the extreme left. Dumbarton's suffered severely, especially from the three rebel guns. But it was Churchill who brought them relief, horsing some of the field-pieces with the carriage horses of the Bishop of Winchester who had accompanied Feversham, and then shifting Kirke's and Trelawny's from the left to give Dumbarton's support. Then, directly it was light

enough to see, the Royal infantry waded across the ditch and came to close quarters with their enemy. Churchill led some of his Royal Dragoons across the Bussex Rhine, charged the rebel guns, and cut down their gunners. By this time the rest of the Royal cavalry had come back from chasing the rebel horse whom they had routed at the beginning of the fight and against guns, infantry, and cavalry even the stubborn bravery of the Somerset men could not prevail. By four o'clock the fight was over, hundreds of the luckless peasants had been cut down and the remainder were being scattered far and wide by a remorseless pursuit. There was no attempt to rally. The insurgents indeed were "so totally routed that not fifty of them remain in a body,"[1] and Churchill pushing on to secure Bridgewater found it practically deserted.

Fortunately for Marlborough's memory, he was not employed in stamping out the embers of the insurrection. With the horrors of the Bloody Assize his name is not associated. Three days after the battle he was already at Wells on the homeward journey,[2] and the only story which connects him with the tragedies of that autumn tells how he replied to the sister of two of Jeffreys's victims who was seeking his influence on behalf of her brothers: "I wish well to your suit with all my heart, but dare not flatter you with any hopes, for that marble [a chimney-piece by which he was standing] is as capable of feeling compassion as the King's heart." Among all the accusations against Churchill he has never been charged with sharing in the traffic in pardons and convicted prisoners in which even the Queen's

[1] Belvoir Castle MSS., ii., 92. [2] Wolseley, i., p. 341.

ladies stooped to take part, and the cruelties perpetrated by Kirke and Jeffreys on the unfortunate peasantry, as unnecessary as they were brutal and vindictive for ample punishment had been meted out to the rebels in the battle, served rather to alarm Churchill as to the true character of James's designs. No definite answer is possible to the question: "Did the Bloody Assize turn Churchill against James?" but the fact that at the trial of Lord Delamere for complicity in the rebellion he, voting first as junior baron, gave the first reply of "Not Guilty" suggests that he was prepared to fight for the King but not to act as his executioner. Delamere was in no way closely connected with Churchill and in helping to secure his acquittal he was bound to incur the King's displeasure. It was possibly this vote which caused him to obtain no higher reward than the Colonelcy of the Third Troop of the Life Guards,[1] while Feversham received the Garter. Anyhow it was not to the man who had done the bulk of the work of suppressing the rebellion that the bulk of the reward went.

[1] This promotion is dated August 8, 1685, *cf.* Dalton, i., 308.

CHAPTER V

THE REVOLUTION

CHURCHILL AND JAMES II.'S DESIGNS—WILLIAM'S LANDING —CHURCHILL'S DEFECTION—THE REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT—CHURCHILL AND THE ARMY.

IN supporting King James against Monmouth, Churchill had done no more than the great majority of his countrymen. The staunchest Protestants were not prepared to support their late monarch's reputed son against a King whom they had as yet no reason to regard with suspicion, but between Monmouth's landing at Lyme Regis and William of Orange's disembarkation in Torbay circumstances underwent an entire change. Encouraged by his success over Monmouth, by the general loyalty at that crisis, James had proceeded from one overt act to another. That he had a formed design to make himself autocratic seemed certain; a subservient bench of judges was ready to pronounce legal any and every "act of power" he might commit, and to give judicial sanction to the most extreme claims he might advance. The issue in 1687 of the Declaration of Indulgence openly proclaimed the use to which James intended to put the wide prerogative which he claimed and to which the official exponents of the law were showing themselves eager to admit him to be entitled. The Church which had raised no objection to the severities practised against Monmouth's followers now realized that her preachers' doctrine of "passive obedience" was to be turned against her. The

Tories, whose hostility to the Whigs and their constitutional principles disposed them to favour the King's efforts at absolutism, took alarm when they saw that absolutism might as easily attack the established Church on behalf of Rome as defend it against Republicans and Dissenters. Gradually from end to end of England men began to realize the goal before James and to face the choice between Church and King.

Churchill's long connection with James and the loyalty traditional in his profession made the dilemma before all Englishmen peculiarly difficult for him. Naturally he was not disturbed by the large increases in the Army for which the inefficiency displayed by the Militia during Monmouth's rebellion served as a most plausible pretext. But when James endeavoured to denationalize the Army by forcing Irish Papists on officers who were quite able and ready to keep their companies full with good English recruits and by appointing Roman Catholic officers to positions of trust, it was a different matter. It is alleged that when five captains of Princess Anne's Regiment (later the 8th Foot or King's) were court-martialled for refusing to receive Irish recruits Churchill, who was a member of the Court, voted for their being shot. This story rests, however, on the far from satisfactory authority of Clarke's *Life of James II.*,[1] which represents Churchill's motive as a wish to increase the King's unpopularity; moreover the incident occurred nearly two years before the Revolution and that Churchill was working against James as early as that is not credible.

But clearly Churchill, in common with the rest of his

[1] Vol. ii., p. 169.

countrymen, could not fail to realize what the King's aims were. The defeat and death of Monmouth had cleared the field, and William of Orange, the son of a Stuart Princess and the husband of James's heiress, was the man to whom many were beginning to look. James, though not an old man, was no longer young nor particularly healthy, and at first people were disposed to endure him, hoping that before long his tyranny would be overpast and that meantime he would not carry matters to an unendurable point. But that discontent was wide-spread and increasing is evident from the step taken by the cautious William in the spring of 1687 when he sent Dykvelt over to sound the chief men in England about the possibility of his intervention.

The best-known English soldier of the day, Churchill was naturally included among those to be sounded. Special weight was added to his attitude by his wife's relations with Anne whose marriage to Prince George of Denmark had done nothing to diminish the influence of Lady Churchill, constantly in attendance upon her as Lady-in-waiting. Anne, whose education had been much neglected, was a person of little force of character, intellectual interest, or ability. She was kindly but indolent, devoid of initiative although possessed of definite views on certain subjects and great capacity for obstinacy; leaning readily on a stronger nature she was easily dominated by a person of Sarah's decided and impetuous temperament, and in the years which followed Anne's marriage Sarah's influence over her reached its height.

Thus if Churchill's steadfast refusal to change his religion lost him ground with his Royal master his wife's

growing domination over the Princess Anne was some compensation. As a Protestant Churchill could not hope for any substantial advancement, but not only did he refuse to follow the example of apostasy set by the unscrupulous Sunderland, he would not even attend the King to Mass and actually went to the length of remonstrating with James when he allowed Popish priests to perform the religious services connected with touching for the King's evil. *The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals* relates that being asked by James what people thought about the matter Churchill boldly expostulated with him. On the King's manifesting annoyance he went on to say: "What I spoke proceeded purely from my zeal for your Majesty's service, which I prefer above all things next to that of God, and I humbly beseech your Majesty to believe no subject in all your three kingdoms would venture further than I would to purchase your favour and good liking, but I have been bred a Protestant and intend to live and die in that communion." This story may be apocryphal but it does seem to sum up Churchill's attitude. Even Macaulay is compelled to admit that the genuine character of Churchill's Protestantism, though in characteristically grudging and double-edged terms,[1] and unless one is to represent Churchill as incredibly wicked and equally incredibly far-sighted one cannot but accept his professions of zeal for Protestantism as sincere. That in 1702 the accession of Anne would place John Churchill in a commanding position in England, make him the most important man in Europe, next to Louis XIV., could not possibly have been anticipated. Apostasy offered

[1] *Cf. History of England*, C. H. Firth's edition, vol. ii., p. 900.

great immediate advantages with very fair security for the future. Churchill was well aware that nine-tenths of the English nation shared his antipathy to Rome and devotion to Protestantism, but even so his refusal to conform to the King's religion involved serious immediate disadvantages: greed and ambition counselled him to turn renegade; adherence to Protestantism offered him no definite prospect of equal advantages since in 1687 the overthrow of James was anything but a foregone conclusion. Certainly at this crisis of Churchill's career it is difficult to point to any sordid motive for this staunch adherence to the faith in which he had been brought up. Anne's letter of December 29, 1687 (O. S.), to Mary is not perhaps unbiassed or independent testimony but her language is very definite; "though he will always obey the King in all things that are consistent with religion—yet, rather than change that, I daresay he will lose all his places and all that he has."

That Churchill had any strong regard for James seems unlikely. James differed from most of his family, especially from his father and his grandson, in that he lacked their personal magnetism. More honest, more straightforward than many of his house, James was not lovable: cold, stern, and unyielding, he had hardly any devoted adherents and Churchill's scanty rewards for his services against Monmouth were proof how little James reckoned his indebtedness to those who would not follow him wherever he led. An angry Jacobite wrote of "the ever infamous treachery of Churchill, a man so raised by the King from nothing,"[1] but the personal relations

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., VIth Report, p. 424.

between the King and Churchill do not impart any special discredit to the deed. The ingratitude was not all on Churchill's side.

And as he had assured the King, Churchill was still zealous for his service, provided obedience to the King was compatible with the interests of Protestantism. When he had assured Dykvelt in May, 1687, that if James should attack the Church he (Churchill) would do nothing to support him, he had added "in all things but this the King may command me,"[1] and though later in the year the French Court received information that Churchill was among others secretly working for the Prince of Orange, his adherence to his religion had already made him an object of suspicion to the partisans of Roman Catholicism, and this information is by no means to be accepted without hesitation. Up to the end of 1687 then, Churchill had corresponded with William, but had gone no further. The progress of affairs in England and on the Continent, however, was influencing him. The spectacle of what had happened in France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had its effect on him as on all his countrymen: it was a foretaste of what might perhaps befall English Protestants if James had his way. But when towards the end of 1687 it became known that the Queen was with child the situation was completely altered. The prospect of a Roman Catholic heir roused those who, counting upon Mary's succession, had been content to let things take their course for a few more years. From the beginning of 1688 communications were growing increasingly frequent between William and the leading Whigs. As

[1] *Cf.* Dalrymple, vol. ii., p. 62.

the year wore on, not only Whigs like Russell and Devonshire and moderate men like Shrewsbury and Halifax, but Tories like Danby were committing themselves to the cause of the Prince of Orange. The seven signatories of the formal invitation to William, dispatched at the end of June, after the acquittal of the Seven Bishops and the birth of the Prince of Wales, did not include Churchill but his sympathy with the step is undoubted; barely a month later he wrote his celebrated letter of July 25/August 4th to William.

SIR: Mr. Sidney will let you know how I intend to behave myself; I think it is what I owe to God and my country: my honour I take leave to put into your Royalle Hinesses hands, in which I think it safe: if you think there is any thing else I ought to doe, you have but to command me, and I shall pay an entiere obedience to it, being resolved to dye in that relidgion that itt hath pleased God to give you both the will and power to protect.

He had been among the persons summoned to attend the "Queen's labour," but deliberately absented himself and he and his wife had been careful for some time past to keep the Princess Anne away from Court, partly lest pressure should be put on her by her father, partly to avoid an open rupture. Anne's fidelity to the Protestant cause was beyond doubt. A firm attachment to the Church was one of her most marked characteristics then as when twenty years later it proved of so much political consequence to Marlborough, and Lady Churchill can have found but little difficulty in enlisting the sympathies of the Princess on the side of the conspirators against her father.

Perhaps the most astonishing feature of the Revolution is James's blindness to the storm gathering about his ears and to the spread of disaffection. Not until September did he begin to take any precautions. He hastened then to equip a fleet, summoned the Scottish troops South, and sent to Ireland for several thousands more of those soldiers whose presence in England was doing so much to undermine the loyalty of the Army and to excite popular alarms. But William's preparations were even more advanced, and when the "Protestant wind" bore William in safety to Torbay, and by keeping Dartmouth's squadron wind-bound in the Thames spared it the test of meeting William at sea, James was by no means well prepared. Moreover, by landing in the West when he had been expected in Yorkshire or East Anglia William had gained a great advantage. The longer battle was postponed the better for him. As Pepys wrote on November 2nd/12th: "the farther the Prince landeth from your Majesty's army he will have greater opportunity for strengthening his owne interest, increasing his owne army and lessening the King's in his march . . . and will obtain time to refresh his army, disperse his manifesto and dissuade the people to joyne with your Majesty." William desired to avoid a battle: a defeat of English troops by an invading army, even by one which included almost as many Englishmen and Scots as Dutchmen, could not fail to provoke resentment and would probably prevent that desertion of James by his own soldiers on which William was counting so much. Indeed the success of the Revolution depended mainly on the attitude which the Army should adopt. Monmouth's rebellion had

shown with what scanty prospects of success armed insurgents could face Regulars, and since 1685 the Army had been increased from under ten thousand to nearly forty thousand. Moreover, William had with him little over fourteen thousand men, including several recently raised and half-trained Dutch regiments, so that had the Army adhered to James it is extremely doubtful if the invasion would have succeeded, certainly it would never have proved so rapid and so bloodless.

When the news of William's landing reached Whitehall, orders were promptly issued to the troops to concentrate at Salisbury. Nearly seven thousand men had to be left to keep the capital in subjection but even so James had ample force to deal with the invaders. Unfortunately for James, among the cavalry regiments who were sent on ahead to delay the Prince's advance during the concentration, were three, the Blues, the Royal Dragoons, and the 8th Horse,[1] whose Colonels had arranged to take the first opportunity of deserting and on November 13th/23rd they went over with all the men of the 8th Horse. This defection, of which James heard before leaving Windsor for Salisbury on November 17th/27th, filled him with alarm and suspicion and shook the confidence of those who were loyal to him in their comrades and their officers. Lord Cornbury, the commander of the Royals, was the heir of Lord Clarendon and the first person of note to join the Prince, and his defection was the signal for many others.

Churchill, who had been promoted Lieutenant-General on November 7th/17th had meanwhile remained in attendance on the King and arrived with

[1] Raised in 1685 by Lord Scarsdale and disbanded in 1697.

him at Salisbury on November 19th/29th. Feversham already suspected his loyalty[1] but he was given command of a brigade. At this moment an advanced-guard of four cavalry regiments and four battalions was at Warminster, twenty miles West of Salisbury, while William was at Exeter with outposts at Honiton and Wincanton. The story told by James[2] of a plot laid by Churchill, Kirke, and others to seize him when going to visit his advanced-guard which was only frustrated by an attack of nose-bleeding, is corroborated by Lord Ailesbury[3] but is less trustworthy than familiar. Certainly Kirke and Churchill and many other officers were seeking a convenient moment to declare for William, but to have carried the King into his rival's camp would have embarrassed rather than profited the invader. William's subsequent anxiety to put no obstacle in the way of his father-in-law's escape suggests that he would hardly have welcomed him as a prisoner at an earlier stage.

On November 24th/December 4th James summoned a council of war at Salisbury at which Churchill is said to have urged the King to fight while Feversham and Dumbarton, distrusting the loyalty of the troops, urged retreat behind the Thames.[4] If Churchill did give this advice it was probably because he hoped thus to avert the suspicion which was already falling upon him, but he realized that the time to move had come and that night he, accompanied by the Duke of Grafton and some other officers, quitted Salisbury for William's

[1] *Cf.* Lediard, i., p. 77.
[2] Cf. *Macpherson's Papers*, i., p. 162: Clarke, ii., p. 212.
[3] *Memoirs*, p. 189.
[4] *Cf.* Dalrymple, ii., p. 201.

camp. According to one story he had already been denounced to the King by Lord Forbes, Colonel of the 18th Royal Irish, whom he and other conspirators had been trying to win to their side,[1] but though Feversham backed up Forbes most vehemently James refused to have Churchill arrested. He could not even then believe that Churchill would desert him, though ever since the beginning of the reign Churchill had shown clearly his lack of sympathy with the King's proceedings.

The letter which Churchill left behind him will be variously interpreted. Those who deny him any good qualities but military skill and great intellectual powers will see in it only the artful special pleading which seeks to put a plausible construction on an act of treachery. But the success of the Revolution was by no means assured when Churchill quitted the side of James, and had Churchill used his influence over the Army on behalf of James he might have established a title to the King's gratitude and favour such as no other man could claim. How the troops would have answered a call from their officers to cross bayonets with the Dutchmen can never be known, but it was the defection of so many leading officers which made James abandon all idea of resistance. Churchill then was risking not a little when he slipped away from Salisbury at dead of night and his letter should be read in the light of that fact.

Sir,—Since men are seldom suspected of sincerity when they act contrary to their interests, and though my dutiful

[1] *Cf.* Dr. King's *Anecdotes of His Own Times*, p. 352.

behaviour to your Majesty in the worst of times (for which I acknowledge my poor services much overpaid) may not be sufficient to induce you to a charitable interpretation of my actions, yet I hope the great advantage I enjoy under your Majesty, which I can never expect in any other change of government, may reasonably convince your Majesty and the world that I am actuated by a higher principle when I offer that violence to my inclination and interest as to desert your Majesty at a time when your affairs seem to challenge the strictest obedience from all your subjects, much more one who lies under the greatest obligations to your Majesty. This, Sir, could proceed from nothing but the inviolable dictates of my conscience and a necessary concern for my religion (which no good man can oppose) and with which I am instructed nothing can come in competition. Heaven knows with what partiality my dutiful opinion of your Majesty has hitherto represented those unhappy designs which inconsiderate and self-interested men have framed against your Majesty's true interest and the Protestant religion, but as I can no longer join with such to give a pretence by conquest to bring them into effect, so I will alway with the hazard of my life and fortune (so much your Majesty's due) endeavour to preserve your Royal person and lawful rights, with all the tender concern and dutiful respect that becomes, Sir, Your Majesty's most dutiful and most obliged subject and servant, Churchill.

Churchill's example was followed by Trelawny, by his brother Colonel Charles Churchill, by many officers of inferior rank, and by some non-commissioned officers and men. Moreover, it left the whole Army so shaken and so full of suspicion that James dared not venture a battle. Already the garrison of Plymouth had declared for William, Danby had seized York, the Earl of Devon-

shire had taken possession of Nottingham, and Lord Delamere had risen in Cheshire. James therefore, unable to trust his soldiers, ordered a retreat behind the Thames. He himself hastened to Whitehall to be confronted by proof that he was to endure heavier blows than Churchill's defection.

Among Churchill's earliest imitators was Prince George of Denmark, who quitted James at Andover on November 24th/December 4th. More important than this was the action taken by Anne who in accordance with the scheme already arranged by Churchill and his wife[1] left London on November 25th/December 5th, and made her way to Northampton. With her went Lady Churchill, who thus anticipated the execution of an order which James had just issued for her confinement to the rooms of her sister, Lady Tyrconnel, in St. James's Palace.[2] A writ was also issued to the Sheriff of Hertfordshire to seize Churchill's goods at St. Albans[3] and his lodgings at Whitehall were searched for papers. But this was shutting the stable door after the steed had been stolen. Anne's flight was as important politically as Churchill's had been in the military sphere. When his daughter deserted him James could hardly expect to find many partisans left. Realizing the hopelessness of his position he fled for France on December 10th/20th and his flight marks the complete success of the movement against him.

That but for the defection of the leading officers of the Army James would have had an excellent chance of

[1] *Cf.* Dalrymple, ii, p. 333.
[2] *Cf.* Dartmouth MSS., i., p. 214, a letter from Pepys.
[3] Sir F. Graham's MSS., p. 350.

success seems clear and this all-important defection was Churchill's work if it was any man's. The success of the Revolution therefore must be attributed in no small degree to Churchill. Undeniably the movement could not have attained success without a good deal of underhand work, of falsehood, treachery, and desertion, but the net result was that it was achieved with a minimum of bloodshed and so speedily that Louis XIV.'s calculations were altogether upset. Louis had expected England to be a prey to internal strife for some time; less than two months after William's landing James was an exile and England, whatever decision might be reached as to the constitutional problems thus created, had definitely declared against despotism and "Popery" and might be ranked from henceforward among the opponents of France. From whatever standpoint the Revolution is regarded it was undeniably a national and a popular act. Some of the means and circumstances might be regretted had any alternative been open. But it is hard to see how in the clashing of his duty to his master with his duty towards his country and his religion, John Churchill could have acted differently without jeopardizing the success of the national cause. His conduct towards James only becomes hard to defend when coupled with his subsequent conduct towards William.

In the debates on the constitutional settlement Churchill took but little part. He signed the "Act of Association" at Westminster on January 21st/31st, 1689, by which some seventy nobles bound themselves to promote the objects set forth in William's proclamation. He joined also in the petition asking William to sum-

mon a Parliament and in the meantime to assume the government of the country. But he voted for the least reasonable of the various solutions of the constitutional problem, that of the extreme Tories which would have established a Regency to govern in the name of James, who, being King de jure, could not be deposed but, being James, could not possibly be allowed to exercise the kingly office. From the final debate on February 7th/17th at which Halifax's pleadings carried the day by the narrowest of majorities in favour of a King, not a Regent, Churchill was absent, pleading illness as his reason. Many who had been most determined to get rid of James had hardly realized the full meaning of their actions and hung back in surprise and dismay when faced with their logical consequences. Churchill was too intelligent to be thus taken by surprise, but he shrank from associating himself openly with the steps needed to give to the exclusion of his old master from the throne as much legality and constitutional character as such an appeal to force could assume. He knew William too well to imagine that the Prince of Orange would be content with any measure which did not assure him of the unqualified adhesion of England to the alliance against Louis XIV. Subterfuges like a Regency on behalf of a man who was doing his utmost to turn out the Regent who was governing in his name or the position of Prince Consort to Mary were out of the question. William would have none of them, and the tact and good sense of Mary contributed largely to the settlement finally reached by which she and William were to reign together. But before this could be achieved it was desirable to satisfy Anne. She had at first expressed the

strongest opposition to the idea that William should be King, but thanks to the good offices of Churchill and his wife her objections were overcome.[1] Anne was interested in the matter as being next heir to Mary, assuming the little Prince of Wales to be excluded. To make William King might damage her chances of succession, but there was no getting over the fact that whoever sat on the English throne after February, 1689, would sit there by a purely parliamentary title, and while her father and brother lived Anne could advance no valid hereditary claim.

This episode is chiefly notable as the beginning of that disagreement between Mary and her sister which influenced Churchill's career so adversely for the next few years. Sarah's statement that Mary never forgave her for having originally opposed the grant of the Crown to William is, like the rest of her assertions, evidence only to be used with great caution. Evidently, however, Mary was alarmed to find how completely her sister was dominated by Lady Churchill, of whose motives and ambitions she was most suspicious. For the moment, however, Churchill was extensively employed by William and not till the question of Anne's allowance came up in the following autumn did his relations with the King become at all strained.

The work on which Churchill was busy was concerned with Army administration. One of Dartmouth's correspondents writes in January, 1689: "Churchill is the greatest man next to Marshall Schomberg in the army

[1] Cf. *Conduct*, pp. 21–22 and Clarendon Correspondence, ii., p. 260.

affairs."[1] James's last order to Feversham, bidding him disband the Army, had been more successful in producing chaos than the dropping of the Great Seal into the Thames had been in upsetting judicial business. It had filled the district round London with unpaid disbanded men; and had not Churchill, by William's orders, hastened to recall these men to the colours and to re-form the regiments Feversham had broken up serious trouble might have followed. Churchill was the natural man for this task: he was popular with the Army, thoroughly acquainted with the officers, and his tact and skill in managing men were of great service. Some of the recently raised regiments it was found necessary to disband, those whose officers or men were strongly identified with the cause of James, but the bulk of the Army on which James had relied to coerce the nation from which it was recruited passed without any difficulty into the new King's service, and the ease with which the transfer was accomplished was largely due to Churchill. In the course of this work he had the opportunity of acquiring no inconsiderable sum in the shape of commissions and fees, a practice which, however undesirable, was sanctioned by the custom of the day. Lord Ailesbury, an unfriendly witness, speaks of the "vast harvest my Lord Churchill made by this,"[2] but the accusation that he accepted bribes to promote incompetent and inefficient officers is more easy to make than to substantiate. The Irish campaigns of 1689–1691 showed that the condition of the Army was far from efficient, that the most flagrant abuses were rife

[1] Dartmouth MSS., i., 219.

[2] *Memoirs*, pp. 244–245.

in the interior economy of the regiments and in the administration generally, that discipline was lax in the extreme, that incompetent officers were numerous; but it is not necessary to attribute all these defects to Churchill's venality. An army which is suddenly expanded to four or five times its original strength is subjected to the most severe of tests, as England has only too good reason to know. When commissions have to be distributed broadcast in a hurry some inefficients are likely to slip in and the raw levies, commanded by inexperienced officers, who died like flies at Dundalk, suffered because England before the Revolution of 1688 had not been provided with an adequate military system, not because Churchill's administrative work had been badly done.

Churchill had been promoted Lieutenant-General on February 14/24, 1689, the grant of this rank which James had made in the previous November having been cancelled; he was also restored to his Colonelcy of the Third Troop of Life Guards and was appointed Gentleman of the Bedchamber to William and sworn of the Privy Council in February, 1689. A further honour was in store for him as on April 9th/19th he was advanced to the rank of Earl, taking the title of Marlborough. He had no property in the neighbourhood of Marlborough nor any special reason for taking that name except a distant connexion through his mother with the former holders of the title.[1] The family residence at Mintern had already passed to his brother Charles, and

[1] This title had been previously bestowed in 1626 on James Ley, sometime Lord Chief Justice of England and Lord High Treasurer, but had become extinct in 1679.

his own house was at Sandridge near St. Albans.[1] But another peerage had already utilized St. Albans for a title and there was no other appropriate name in the neighbourhood.

[1] This, formerly the property of his father-in-law, had been left to Lady Churchill and her sisters jointly but she had induced her husband to buy her sisters' shares and soon afterwards a new and larger house was built which was the Churchills' main home till Blenheim was ready.

CHAPTER VI

FLANDERS AND IRELAND

CAMPAIGN OF 1689 IN FLANDERS—THE IRISH CAMPAIGN—CAPTURE OF CORK AND KINSALE—MARLBOROUGH DISSATISFIED—CORRESPONDENCE WITH ST. GERMAIN—CAMPAIGN OF 1691 IN FLANDERS.

BUSY as Marlborough was in reorganizing the Army he was before long to exchange this work for more congenial employment. Louis XIV. had taken up the cause of the deposed monarch and even before the coronation of William and Mary a French squadron had escorted James to Ireland. England's reply was the declaration of war against France on May 5th/15th and though the chief efforts were devoted to Ireland a small contingent was dispatched to the Netherlands to join the main army of the anti-French coalition. To the command of this force, originally about eight thousand men,[1] Marlborough had been appointed some time before war was declared and the transport of the troops to Holland began almost immediately. When Marlborough landed at Rotterdam (May 17th/27th) his men had already disembarked and he pushed on at once to the Allied rendezvous at Maastricht. Marlborough's selection to command this contingent was natural

[1] It included the 2nd Troop of Life Guards, Oxford's Horse (R.H.G.), a battalion each of the Second (Coldstream) and Third (Scots) Guards and of the Royal Scots, the 3rd (Buffs), 16th (Bedfords), and 21st (Royal Scots Fusiliers) with three battalions subsequently disbanded, Hales', Collier's, and Fitzpatrick's.

enough and it had the additional advantage that in Flanders he escaped opposing James himself, as he must have done had he gone to Ireland, a situation to which William may have desired not to expose him, not from any suspicions of Marlborough's loyalty but from the King's own kindness of heart. When in the following year Marlborough actually proceeded to Ireland James had already left the country. The dispatch of a British contingent to the Netherlands was also natural. For political reasons it was well that Great Britain should be represented in the main army of the Allies and that British troops should take the place in Flanders of the Dutchmen and other foreigners who had accompanied William and were under orders for Ireland. Moreover, in Flanders Marlborough and his division enjoyed opportunities of earning distinction which would not have fallen to their lot in Ulster, where Marlborough would merely have been a divisional commander under Schomberg, whose ill-success was mainly due to defective organization, transport, and administration which the presence of Marlborough and his men would in no way have remedied.

The army of which Marlborough's division formed part was commanded by a respectable but notoriously unlucky soldier, the Prince of Waldeck. Its task was to hold in check Marshal d'Humières, whose army had invaded the Spanish Netherlands early in May but promptly adopted a defensive attitude as France was making her main effort upon the Rhine. Waldeck with less than forty thousand men all told felt too weak to attack and spent three months in inactivity between Tirlemont and Judoigne, allowing himself to be para-

lyzed by an opponent of equal strength. D'Humières, however, proved equally unenterprising and actually Waldeck moved first, crossing the Sambre near Charleroi (August 16th/26th) and encamping near Walcourt, some ten miles further South. No strategical object can be discovered in this move beyond the current preference for taking part in the enemy's country in order to transfer to hostile territory the burden of supporting one's own troops with forage and provisions. However, d'Humières had just been reinforced and promptly advanced to engage the Allies.

On the morning of August 17th/27th several Allied foraging parties started out covered by a detachment under Colonel Hodges of the 16th Foot, the infantry of which occupied the village of Forgé while the horse pushed forward to reconnoitre and speedily encountered d'Humières's cavalry, advancing Northward in force. Before the French advance the Allied horse gradually gave way, but the alarm was duly given and Marlborough had time to ride forward to Forgé. Here he found Hodges and his men putting up such a stout defence that the French cavalry were checked and the foragers were given time to get away. But as the French pressed on Marlborough found it necessary to withdraw his infantry and with the aid of some cavalry who had now come up this operation, most difficult because the troops were committed to a close fight, was successfully accomplished and Marlborough posted his men on some high ground near Walcourt, which place was furnished with walls and a ditch. If the French were to achieve anything decisive Walcourt must be taken, but the headlong attacks of the French and

Swiss Guards broke down against the stout resistance of Hodges's men whom Marlborough had reinforced with a couple of battalions. Finally, when d'Humières attempted to outflank the defenders' right, Marlborough seized the opportunity to launch a counter-attack which drove the French back in confusion. He himself headed the Household Cavalry in this charge and the success of the Allies was universally attributed to him. The French themselves acknowledged readily how great a part he had played in their repulse[1] and Waldeck wrote of him to William in the warmest terms: he had already formed a high opinion of Marlborough as a disciplinarian[2] and now declared that Marlborough had in this one battle displayed more military talent than most commanders do in a lifetime. William acknowledged his services in unequivocal language: "it is to you," he wrote, "that this advantage is principally owing." Moreover, Walcourt, though but a minor action, does deserve to escape oblivion as the British Army's "baptism of fire" in European warfare and it was not only the commander who earned Waldeck's praises: he wrote of Marlborough's troops in most complimentary terms; they had behaved admirably and had displayed a most astonishing "joye de combattre."[3] Waldeck, however, was in no position to follow up his success. His army lacked strength and homogeneity, and well as the English contingent

[1] The French officer who emerged from this action with most credit was Villars, who distinguished himself by covering with his cavalry the retreat of the defeated infantry.

[2] *Cf.* S. P. Dom. King William's Chest, v., p. 44 *cf.* p. 62.

[3] *Ibid*, v., p. 96.

had done in action their condition as the campaign wore on became very unsatisfactory. In September Waldeck had to report that, despite all Marlborough's exertions, the English had a large sick-list and were in a bad state as regards clothing and equipment.[1] The campaign thus ended without advantage to either side.

Marlborough returned from the Continent with his military reputation much enhanced. The barren campaign in Ireland, where nothing had been achieved beyond the relief of Londonderry and the Enniskillen-ers' victory at Newton Butler, made his success at Walcourt all the more popular. But though the Colonelcy of the Royal Fusiliers was bestowed on him, and William received him with marked cordiality, it was not long before the relations between Marlborough and his King became strained. The lavish grants of money and titles to William's Dutch friends were already exciting unfavourable comment and Marlborough unfortunately could not conceal his annoyance at finding Dutchmen preferred before him. Naturally enough he rated his services to William high, and he had some justification in thinking his rewards hardly proportionate especially in comparison with Bentinck's and Keppel's. But Marlborough could not keep his resentment to himself, or even to his more intimate friends, and he made himself to some extent the mouthpiece of the English officers' discontent. Had he been more fortunate in his wife he might have received counsels of prudence and wisdom, but Lady Marlborough, ambitious, jealous, devoid of balance and self-control, only fomented his discontent and helped

[1] *Cf.* S. P. Dom. King William's Chest, v., p. 124.

to widen the breach with William. Nothing could have been more injudicious or unpatriotic, and to make matters worse Anne's relations with Mary and her husband were far from harmonious. Friction first displayed itself over Anne's allowance. Anne had received thirty thousand pounds a year from James II., and was anxious to be made independent of William by having a permanent revenue settled upon her. But the King did not favour this proposal and Mary gave great offence to Anne by using very plain language. Unfortunately the one person who might have brought about a friendly settlement used her influence in the opposite direction. As bad a counsellor to her friend as to her husband Lady Marlborough did her utmost to increase Anne's annoyance and to exaggerate her pretensions. In the quarrel over the allowance Lady Marlborough incited Anne to hold out for seventy thousand pounds a year and all who for various reasons disliked the new order of things found an outlet for their disaffection in supporting Anne's claim. In the end Anne got her independent income but at the rate of only fifty thousand pounds. This settlement was something of a rebuff to William and Mary, and as Anne held Marlborough and his wife mainly responsibile for her success the King and Queen naturally resented the part they had played and before long the Queen's hostility to the Churchills was notorious. This estrangement between Mary and Anne was no trivial matter: it distinctly embarrassed William and gave rise to intrigues and encouraged disaffection. William cannot altogether escape responsibility for it: his grants to his Dutch friends were unwarrantable and injudicious, his attitude to Marl-

borough did not err on the side of generosity, and his judgment was perhaps at fault. He was possibly inclined to distrust those of the authors of the Revolution who, like Marlborough, had owed much to James; they had been faithless once and he could not rely on them implicitly. But Marlborough's allegiance was worth securing and would not have been very hard to secure. He was still far from a rich man, and love of money was undeniably an element in his character. Its importance has been unfairly exaggerated but its existence cannot in any candid estimate be overlooked. It was mainly from dissatisfaction with his rewards that Marlborough began to make overtures to the exiled monarch at St. Germain.

However, as yet there was nothing approaching a rupture, despite Marlborough's undisciplined grumblings against Dutch favourites and the attitude of opposition adopted by Anne at Lady Marlborough's inspiration. When in May, 1690, William crossed over to Ireland to try conclusions with James, he left Marlborough as Commander-in-Chief in England[1] and as one of the Council appointed to assist Mary. Mary was no friend to Marlborough; writing of him to William she declared: "I can never either trust or esteem him," but she had to rely on his advice in all matters of military administration and there is no reason to believe that at this time he was anything but loyal. His correspondence with William, concerned mainly with details of administration, has the stamp of sincerity. Of the Council Danby, now Marquis of Carmarthen,

[1] His commission as Commander-in-Chief is dated June 3/13, 1690. *Cf.* Home Office Papers, Military Entry Book ii., p. 129.

and Nottingham were also members and these two worked in conjunction with Marlborough and were largely responsible for the direction of affairs. Thus it was at Marlborough's suggestion that Parliament was prorogued from July 7th/17th to July 28th/August 7th,[1] and one finds Marlborough discussing the choice of flag-officers for the fleet,[2] though fortunately for his reputation there seems no reason to hold him individually responsible for the injudicious orders sent to Torrington on June 29th/July 9th, which resulted in the Allies' defeat at Beachy Head, a defeat which might have been avoided had Torrington been left to carry out his own most admirable strategy. Fortunately for England on the day after the ill-starred fight off Beachy Head a decisive battle was fought on the Boyne and William's victory (July 1st/11th) followed by James's flight redressed the balance. The French with all their troops employed on the Rhine or in Flanders had no men available for a serious landing on English soil even when Beachy Head seemed to have opened the door to an invader. After cruising in the Channel till the beginning of August the French returned empty-handed to port, their sole achievement having been to burn the petty town of Teignmouth. With their enemy relapsing into inactivity the Allied fleet, reinforced by ships returned from the Mediterranean and elsewhere, was able to utilize the Channel as though Beachy Head had never been fought. Marlborough was quick to see that on promptly following up the success at the Boyne depended the fortunes of the war in Ireland and no less

[1] *Cf.* S. P. Dom. King William's Chest, vii., p. 58.
[2] *Ibid.*, vii., p. 156.

quick to realize how best the victory might be followed up. The essential thing was to prevent French aid reaching Ireland and while this was primarily a naval problem the reduction of the chief ports on the Southern coast of Ireland was an object of the utmost importance. The much indented Munster coast teems with bays in which whole fleets might ride at anchor but troops who landed in one of the remoter havens of Kerry would find themselves absolutely in the wilds, transport almost unobtainable, roads into the interior practically non-existent. Something more than a mere sheltered landing-place was wanted and if Cork and Kinsale could be secured for William the difficulties of communication between France and Ireland would be greatly enhanced. But the army in Ireland had its hands full with the siege of Limerick, and Marlborough saw that the most effective method of dealing with Cork and Kinsale would be a direct attack from England. This project he laid before Mary early in August,[1] pointing out the great advantages to be derived from a successful descent and arguing that such a stroke could be safely delivered owing to the improvement in the naval situation. But the Council was reluctant to risk anything and, still obsessed with fears of a French invasion, would not contemplate detaching troops from England. In vain Admiral Russell supported Marlborough's proposals, Carmarthen and his colleagues would not consent. Fortunately Mary insisted on referring the proposal to William, and Marlborough drew up a full explanation of his scheme which was promptly sent off to the King. If William's reputation as a soldier depended only on

[1] Dalrymple, Appendix to Book V.

his planning of campaigns and on his capacity to grasp the main features of a strategical situation it would stand very high.[1] No one could have been quicker to appreciate Marlborough's scheme and the enormous advantage of capturing Cork and Kinsale before Louis could turn them into formidable points of entry for French reinforcements. To the surprise and alarm of the Council who, Nottingham alone excepted, were "very much against it, only complying because it is your orders and wondering England should be so exposed,"[2] William cordially approved the project. Accordingly on August 25th/September 4th orders were issued for eight regiments to embark and the Admiralty was instructed to provide a sufficient escort for the transports.[3]

The preparations were pushed on with the utmost energy, though care was taken to conceal the true destination of the expedition. Rumours were spread abroad that it was intended for the French coast and not even the Lords of the Admiralty were taken into the secret. Some six thousand infantry were allotted to the expedition, mainly battalions which had been recalled from Holland and Ireland on the news of Beachy Head.[4] By September 4th/14th all were aboard; indeed so expeditious had Marlborough's preparations been that the troops could have embarked sooner had transports

[1] *Cf.* Sir Julian Corbett's *England in the Mediterranean*, especially chapter xxvi.

[2] *Cf.* Mary to William, August 26th/September 5th. Dalrymple, Appendix to Book V.

[3] H. O. Military Entry Book, ii., p. 149.

[4] Of existing units Marlborough had under him the 4th (King's Own), 7th (Royal Fusiliers), 8th (King's), 13th (Somerset L. I.).

been ready. Bad weather and unfavourable winds, however, occasioned delays and not till September 17th/27th could the expedition finally get started.

The year had already reached the season when armies were thinking of winter-quarters and when a cautious admiral was growing apprehensive lest his "capital ships" should be caught in an autumn gale which their lack of seaworthy qualities would make dangerous for them, but Marlborough was not deterred by considerations which would have led a less daring man to abandon the venture. Directly the wind served, he made straight for Cork and arrived off Cork Harbour on September 21st/October 1st. He could hear nothing of the cavalry whom Count Solms, now Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, was detaching to join him but he did not hesitate. "Being resolved not to lose this good weather,"[1] he promptly entered the harbour, silencing a battery near the entrance and despite delays from lack of wind by September 23rd/October 3rd all the troops were landed at West Passage, seven miles East of Cork. Only trifling opposition was encountered and while the disembarkation of the heavy guns and stores was pushed rapidly on, thanks to the energetic co-operation of the ships' crews, detachments were pushed forward to Cork. The garrison made some resistance but "though they lined the hedges they were very easily beat from them,"[2] and driven back to the city. On September 24th/October 4th the expected cavalry arrived and forced the garrison to evacuate the suburbs

[1] M. to Nottingham, September 25th/October 5th. S. P. Dom. William and Mary, xiv., p. 29.

[2] M. to Nottingham, *op. cit.*

North of the Lee as well as the chief outwork on that side, Shandon Castle.

The city of Cork in 1690 covered the Western end of a marshy island between two branches of the River Lee, being protected both to West and East by the swampy character of the ground. Its chief defence was a strongly built work which commanded the city to the South, known as Fort Elizabeth. This, however, was commanded by a small work known as "the Catte," insignificant in itself but standing on a hill some 90 feet higher than the city, 400 yards from its walls and 300 from Fort Elizabeth. North of the city as well as South the ground rose sharply, so that Cork was commanded from both suburbs. Marlborough's promptitude had allowed him to obtain possession of "the Catte" on the same day that the cavalry seized Shandon Castle and with these two important points in his hands he had secured a big advantage. But the essence of his problem was time. Cork must be reduced before bad weather set in and there were not many days to waste. Against interruption by the Irish field army Marlborough could feel fairly secure. The bulk of William's army in Ireland had, after the unsuccessful siege of Limerick, been disposed so as to form a cordon along the Shannon, "that river being the frontier of the enemy"[1] while a strong detachment of cavalry had been posted at Mallow specially to cover the siege.[2]

Marlborough's plan was quickly formed. Fort Elizabeth would under normal conditions have been the natural place to attack. But it was stoutly built

[1] Parker, p. 28. [2] *Cf.* King William's Chest, vii., pp. 171 and 176.

and its reduction might prove lengthy. Accordingly Marlborough decided to breach the weaker Eastern wall of the city which could be enfiladed from "the Catte" and attacked directly by batteries lower down the Lee, while further batteries were thrown up to play upon Fort Elizabeth from the South. While these batteries were being prepared a troublesome question arose. On September 26th/October 6th Duke Ferdinand William of Wurtemberg arrived with some Danish infantry and promptly claimed command of the whole force. To this Marlborough could not agree: he had been definitely appointed to command the expedition: he was senior as a Lieutenant-General to the Duke whose pretensions were solely based on his position as a member of a reigning house. However, to avoid friction he suggested a compromise which satisfied the Duke; by this they were to command on alternate days, and the Duke's feelings were further appeased by Marlborough giving "Würtemberg" as the password on his first day of command.

This crisis averted, the siege was vigorously pressed and by September 27th/October 7th a breaching battery was in position five hundred yards from the Eastern wall which crumbled rapidly under its blows. By the time that the tide had ebbed sufficiently next day for the river to be waded a thoroughly practicable breach existed. Directly the tide served two storming columns crossed the river through water up to their armpits and were gathering at the foot of the breach for the final rush when the white flag was hoisted. Marlborough would not hear of anything but unconditional surrender and four thousand Irish troops became prisoners of war.

The feeble resistance offered by the garrison prevents the capture of Cork from being reckoned a very remarkable achievement but that should not detract from Marlborough's credit. His energy and resource had been largely responsible for the rapidity with which everything had been done: his grasp of tactical possibilities had been as clearly illustrated as his insight into strategical essentials: he had been as quick to realize that there was no need to attack the enemy where he was strongest, at Fort Elizabeth, as to grasp the importance of reducing Cork. The tact with which he had handled the Duke of Wurtemberg had also been apparent in his maintenance of the friendliest relations with the Navy, a vital feature in an "amphibious" operation. And whatever the defence offered it was no mean feat to have reduced so large a city garrisoned by four thousand men in less than a week.

But with Kinsale untaken Marlborough's work was only half done. Kinsale, "in virtue of its situation and its facilities as an anchorage," was regarded by the military authorities in Ireland as more important than Cork and as "the most vulnerable point in their defence against possible invasion."[1]

Cork had not yet acquired its later pre-eminence among the cities of Southern Ireland and it was Kinsale which the Spaniards had seized in Elizabeth's days and which Rupert had made his base in 1649. At the earliest possible moment therefore Marlborough started off four hundred mounted men for Kinsale and they, arriving before its gates by 2 P.M. on September 29th/October 9th, were able to prevent the Governor

[1] *Cf.* Ormonde MSS., iii., Introduction, pp. x–xi.

from burning the town before shutting himself up in the forts. Thus when Marlborough and the infantry arrived three days later they found billets available, a great advantage at that season with the weather already breaking and a sick-list of considerable proportions.

Kinsale lies on the left bank of the Bandon River where the estuary of that stream opens out into one of Ireland's finest harbours. A little below the town were the fortifications which commanded the anchorage, the Old Fort on a promontory jutting out from the right bank of the Bandon, the New Fort, well supplied with heavy guns and well sited, being nearly opposite it on the Northern side. A skilfully planned assault at dawn on October 3rd/13th, well executed by eight hundred men who had been ferried across the harbour by night, surprised and captured the much weaker Old Fort. But to take the New Fort guns were needed and it looked for the moment as though the roads and the weather between them would rob Marlborough of success. The siege-train at Cork was barely twenty miles away, but even for infantry the roads were almost impassable, and as contrary winds forbade the dispatch of the guns by sea it was by road that they had to come. Marlborough without waiting for the guns opened trenches against the New Fort and began constructing batteries within pistol-shot of the counterscarp, but, as his letter of October 8th/18th[1] shows, he was uneasy: the weather was becoming very inclement, the enemy's horse had advanced to Macroom, only twelve miles away, and it was rumoured that Sarsfield and their foot

[1] S. P. Dom., Ireland 362, p. 33.

were approaching. However, on October 11th/21st the belated guns appeared and were promptly mounted in the already completed batteries. Their fire soon produced good results and on October 15th/25th, just as the assault was about to be launched, the garrison asked for terms. To bring operations to the earliest possible end, as his troops were suffering severely from bad weather combined with hard work, Marlborough allowed the garrison good terms. On October 16th/26th they departed for Limerick with arms and baggage and Marlborough was in possession of Kinsale.

Marlborough's first independent command had thus resulted in a striking success. He had only taken twenty-three days to redeem his promise to the Queen and his enterprise, energy, and skill had played no small part in achieving this result. With a small force and operating at a bad season he had accomplished a really valuable service. The Irish themselves fully admitted the importance of the blow inflicted upon them.[1] The fall of Cork and Kinsale seriously impeded their communications with France. French reinforcements for Ireland would now have to go round to the Shannon to find a good port for disembarkation and this would involve a more difficult voyage and a greater liability to interruption by the English fleet than if Cork or Kinsale were their goal. The mere intelligence that Marlborough's expedition was on its way had alarmed Lauzun for his communications and accelerated the departure from Ireland of the French contingent.[2]

[1] *Cf.* Fingall MSS. (Hist. MSS Com.), a contemporary account of much interest which is very explicit on the point.

[2] *Cf.* Wolseley ii., p. 162.

Ginckel was not a little indebted to Marlborough's reduction of the chief ports of Munster for his successful campaign of Athlone, Aughrim, and Limerick. Moreover Marlborough's operations compared very favourably with what had been done elsewhere. William's repulse from Limerick had somewhat faded the laurels of the Boyne but the capture of Cork and Kinsale went far to restore the prestige lost at Limerick. Moreover, as the work of an English general and of an army mainly composed of English troops it was specially welcome in England, where jealousy of Dutch and other foreign generals was sufficiently marked to make an "English" success very popular. Marlborough's reputation was deservedly increased, and his position as the leading English officer was confirmed. Rumour was busy that autumn assigning various honours to Marlborough. He was expected to be made Master General of the Ordnance in Schomberg's vacancy. He was to be made a Duke "in consideration of his extraordinary merits,"[1] and the only doubt of the gossips was as to the title. Some were for Albemarle, some for Bucks. Unfortunately, however, though William freely acknowledged the talent which Marlborough had displayed in this brief campaign, "no officer living," he declared, "who has seen so little service as my Lord Marlborough is so fit for great commands," he omitted to confer upon him any tangible reward. Marlborough, already dissatisfied to the verge of disaffection, bitterly resented this as a further proof of ingratitude, if not of jealousy, and in the winter following his success in Ireland he entered into correspondence with St. Germain and

[1] Le Fleming MSS., p. 301.

sought to make his peace with the man to whose overthrow he had contributed so largely.

The charges connected with this correspondence are so much the most serious count in the indictment against Marlborough that it is well to remember that the principal witnesses against him are Jacobites, notably Macpherson's *Original Papers containing the Secret History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover*, and the *Life of James II.*, published by the Reverend James Clarke in 1816, which contains extracts purporting to come from a journal kept by James himself, the original of which has been lost. Outside these sources there is not much definite evidence. Lord Ailesbury, another Jacobite, names Marlborough as one of the leading statesmen who were in correspondence with James II.[1] The Hatton Correspondence also[2] includes "correspondence with King James" among the "other things of high misdemeanour" with which Marlborough was charged. Moreover Burnet in the *Rough Draft* of his history definitely says "the King said to myself that he had very good reason to believe that he [Marlborough] had made his peace with King James and was engaged in a correspondence with France."[3] Naturally one would hardly expect to find much contemporary evidence for the correspondence, but even Macaulay cites nothing but Clarke and Macpherson to support his vigorous and trenchant denunciations of Marlborough.

But, if it can be accepted as genuine, Macpherson's evidence is amply sufficient to blacken Marlborough's

[1] *Memoirs*, ii., p. 291. [2] II., p. 170.
[3] Harleian MSS., 6584, ff. 68–69.

reputation, and historians in general have used it with unquestioning confidence. Von Ranke wrote[1] of Macpherson's documents "no one has ever doubted their authenticity" and though after a critical analysis of Clarke's work his verdict is that it is not the work of James himself he holds that in a considerable measure it originated from him. But in 1897 Colonel Arthur Parnell writing in the *English Historical Review*[2] disputed the genuine character of Macpherson's evidence and of that drawn from the *Life of James II.* It would be comforting to be able to accept unreservedly Colonel Parnell's conclusions which not merely sweep away the bulk of the evidence against Marlborough but leave him as a much maligned man. Besides the discrepancies and inconsistencies which he discovers in Macpherson's statements, Colonel Parnell quotes a passage from Lord Ailesbury's *Memoirs.* Incidentally this passage is an admission that there was some correspondence between Marlborough and the exiled monarch but, if it can be relied upon, it does support the Colonel's attempt to explain away this inconvenient fact. What Lord Ailesbury says is this:

It is very certain that the King [William] gave leave to the Earl of Marlborough, my Lord Godolphin, the Duke of Shrewsbury and Admiral Russell to correspond with my Lord Middleton at St. Germains. They infused into the King the great advantage that might arise to him by it, and on my conscience I believe it. The plausible pretext was that my Lord Middleton should be deluded, that he should

[1] Vol. vi., p. 34.
[2] E. H. R., 1897, pp. 254–284.

know nothing of what passed in England of high secret moment, but that they four should wire-draw all out of my Lord Middleton.[1]

Lord Ailesbury's statement is supported by passages in the *Life of James II.*[2] which take this view of Russell's communications with James and hint that Marlborough was playing the same game. Macaulay himself admits that Marlborough's assertions of penitence and his promises to secure a restoration were absolutely insincere and merely aimed at deluding James and his court. But it is too much to suggest that during Marlborough's banishment from Court he was really working in concert with Godolphin and Sunderland and through them with William, that he was in effect acting as William's secret service agent to deceive the Jacobites.[3] Such a view becomes all the more improbable when it is coupled with assertions "that on account of his dismissal he ever cherished the faintest animus against William, is extremely unlikely," that "as soon as the Queen died an open reconciliation was established between him [William] and the Marlboroughs," and that William "soon raised Marlborough to dignity and honour."[4] The circumstantial evidence is certainly all against Colonel Parnell's ingenious theory.

Macpherson's connection with the Ossianic poems, if not sufficient to convict him of forgery, does not exactly

[1] Ailesbury's *Memoirs*, ii., p. 391.

[2] II., p. 523, *cf.* p. 558. [3] E. H. R., xii., p 270.

[4] Mary died in January, 1695 (N. S.), not till June, 1698, was Marlborough readmitted to the Privy Council.

guarantee his good faith or predispose inquirers to rely confidently on his statements. The documents known as the Nairne Papers, which contain the charges against Marlborough and his contemporaries, are now in the Bodleian Library and form part of the collection made by the historian Thomas Carte, who had acquired them by some unrecorded means. They are "projects or drafts, with corrections, evidently intended as the ground-work of reports for the information of the French Court" (Parnell) and bear traces of having been altered by Lord Melfort, one of James II.'s Secretaries of State. Colonel Parnell's theory is that Melfort put them together to strengthen his own waning influence by representing himself as closely in touch with a large disaffected party in England by whose aid Louis XIV. might restore James. Only by detailed examination of the separate documents could Colonel Parnell's assertion that they are full of inconsistencies and inaccuracies be satisfactorily established or refuted. His contentions have recently been challenged with some success[1] and there is no getting away from the fact, sufficiently established by the other evidence cited, that Marlborough did enter into some communications with St. Germain. That Marlborough was plotting for the restoration of James or that his professed penitence had any vestige of sincerity is not to be believed. Lord Wolseley is probably right when he attributes the correspondence mainly to a desire to secure safety in the event of a Jacobite restoration.[2] To secure, as Marl-

[1] Cf. *Macpherson and the Nairne Papers*, by G. Davies. E. H. R., 1920, pp. 367–376.

[2] II., pp. 227 ff.

borough did, a free pardon from James by promises he did not mean to keep was comparatively easy, though clearly James himself was not wholly taken in by Marlborough's "words and protestations," yet, as he writes, Marlborough "put so plausible a face upon his reasons and actions, that if they were not accompanied with truth and sincerity, they had at least a specious appearance of fair and honest dealings.[1] Another motive has been suggested[2] which is supported by several facts otherwise a little difficult to fit in. Rejecting Macaulay's view that Marlborough was contemplating an attempt by violence to seat Anne on the throne during Mary's or William's lifetime, it is suggested that he "wanted to force William into employing English troops under English officers and himself at the head of them." This explains his openly expressed dissatisfaction and his deliberate pose as the representative and spokesman of the English officers. A man with his capacity for self-control had some purpose in letting his house become the "constant rendezvous of the English officers"[3] and in seeking "to possess all the English with an aversion to the Dutch." Ambitious, justly confident in his own capacities, angry at seeing others obtain the rewards and distinctions he coveted, Marlborough wanted to make William feel his power, to make the Dutch favourites disgorge their gains, and to get rid of the Dutch generals to whom were entrusted the commands to which he legitimately aspired.

[1] Clarke, ii., s. 476.

[2] Cf. *Quarterly Review*, vol 179, a review of Lord Wolseley's *Marlborough*.

[3] *Cf.* Harleian MSS., 6584, folio 66.

But while these motives may explain his conduct they are no defence for what was undoubtedly treasonable, nor does it exculpate him that he was doing no more than the other leading men of the day. This may be reasonably pleaded when it is attempted to judge him by the standards of another age, but it does not in the least condone his offence against his country. Putting the matter in the light most favourable to Marlborough —short of accepting altogether Colonel Parnell's too sweeping exculpation—that he was merely "hedging," merely securing his own safety without doing anything seriously detrimental to his country's interests, he stands convicted even so of selfishness and lack of patriotism. One can excuse, or rather justify, his personal treachery to James as essential to the success of the Revolution and as not inspired mainly by selfish motives, at any rate it may be fairly maintained that he stood to gain less by deserting James than by siding with him completely. But Marlborough's treachery to William was treachery to his country, as well as to his sovereign. William may have treated Marlborough ungenerously and unwisely, the complaints against the preference given to foreign officers and courtiers were warranted, but this is no excuse for Marlborough. Even admitting that with all his lavish promises he never did anything for the Jacobites (*vide infra* pp. 480–1)—indeed he hardly concealed his insincerity from them—his communications with St. Germain are a grievous stain on his record.

Still, at the beginning of 1691 even if he was corresponding with St. Germain, Marlborough had apparently escaped detection, at any rate despite his

grumblings and openly expressed dissatisfaction he was not left without employment. Early in the spring William crossed to the Continent leaving the command in England in Marlborough's hands. Marlborough was none too well pleased at being left behind. He would have liked the command in Ireland which had been given to a Dutchman, Ginckel, and at first did not conceal his dissatisfaction, but he soon threw himself into his work with vigour. On February 27th/March 9th William's confidant, Henry Sidney, wrote to the King: "My Lord Marlborough behaves himself much better than he did at first after your going away, he is now pretty diligent and seldom fails the Committee."[1] His duties provided ample scope for his energies. Recruits were badly needed both for Ireland, where the casualties had been heavy, and for Flanders, in which country a British contingent of ten thousand men was to be employed, and they proved hard to obtain. Marlborough found his work much impeded by the obstruction of the Lord President, Carmarthen, of whom he wrote to William on February 17th/27th:

I must take leave to tell your Majesty that I am tired out of my life with the very unreasonable way of proceeding of my Lord President, for he is very ignorant of what is fit for an officer, both as to recruits and everything else as to a soldier: so that when I have given such as I think necessary orders he does what he thinks fit and enters into the business of tents, arms and the off-reckonings . . . so that at this rate business is never done.

He complains further that Carmarthen's unreasonable prejudice against him prevents him doing the service

[1] King William's Chest, viii., p. 103.

he is keen to render and the letter, which is couched in an almost confidential tone, ends with a strong expression of his desire for active service.[1] By the middle of March it was being rumoured that Marlborough was "to go in a few days for Holland"[2]; on the 24th Robert Harley wrote that the Earl was "hastening his equipage for Flanders"[3] and on May 2d/12th, when William returned to The Hague after a brief visit to England, he was accompanied by Marlborough, who was to command the British contingent, which consisted of two "troops" (practically equivalent to regiments) of the Household Cavalry, four battalions of the Guards, and ten other battalions of infantry.

Unfortunately for Marlborough the campaign of 1691 in Flanders proved barren of opportunities for distinction. Its main value to him was the insight it gave him into the methods and attitude of a body which was to cause him an infinity of trouble in years to come, the States General. No greater handicap to a commander in the field could have possibly been devised and Marlborough, who was extensively employed in administrative work, had ample occasion to realize their capacities for vexatious obstruction and interference. Numerically William's troops were rather stronger than the opposing army under Luxemburg, but their superiority in numbers was not enough to compensate for the deficiencies in their equipment and for their lack of homogeneity. The French opened the

[1] King William's Chest, viii., p. 94.
[2] Greenwich Hospital News Letters, iv., p. 4.
[3] Portland MSS., iii., p. 460.

campaign by a sudden attack on the important but neglected fortress of Mons. This place Marlborough's old comrade of 1674, Boufflers, invested and captured in March before the Allies were ready for the field. Marlborough had realized the liability of Mons to a surprise attack and had urged that its fortifications should be made good, but his warnings had been unheeded and were borne out by the event. This success put the French in the ascendant, and William's first thought was to cover Brussels which the French could threaten from Mons. Beyond this he hoped, if he could manœuvre Luxemburg away from the neighbourhood, to attempt the recovery of Mons; but he was not prepared to risk a decisive battle and in the game of manœuvring, which was all that William dared attempt, Luxemburg had few equals. But as the French commander was equally unwilling to take the bull by the horns the campaign resolved itself into an exhibition of skilful and elaborate but futile manœuvres, from which neither general could gain any solid advantage. On one occasion when the Allied rear-guard was being pressed by the enemy during the passage of a river near Grammont it was by the intervention of Marlborough and two British brigades that the endangered rear-guard was rescued[1] but no general action followed.

It was during this wearisome and indefinite campaign that the conversation must have taken place which is recorded in the *Lives of Marlborough and Eugene* (p. 30). The Prince of Vaudemont, one of William's most trusted subordinates, being asked his opinion of the principal English officers serving with the Allied army replied.

[1] *Cf.* Marchmont MSS., p. 123.

Kirke has fire, Lanier thought, Mackay skill and Colchester bravery, but there is something inexpressible in the Earl of Marlborough. All their virtues seem to be united in his single person. I have lost my wonted skill in physiognomy if any subject of your Majesty can ever attain such a height of military glory as that to which this combination of sublime perfections must raise him.

The superlatives in the last sentence rather suggest that this unusually accurate prophecy was composed, or at least written up, after the event, but there is no need to reject the whole story as apocryphal and it may be admitted as proof that even in this uneventful campaign Marlborough managed to impress his contemporaries with his capacity to attain to great distinction. Beyond that the campaign is only important as an admirable illustration of the strategy of the day. Once committed to the siege of a place like Mons or Tournay an army found itself at a considerable disadvantage if there was in the field a hostile force of anything like equal strength. While it was tied down to the siege operations its communications and magazines were liable to be assailed and the necessity of providing a covering force as well as the actual besieging troops was a constant difficulty. If the covering force was too weak it could not hold the enemy in check, if it was strong enough for that task the siege might languish for want of a force sufficient to make headway. Hence when faced by approximately equal force the average commander would hesitate even before starting on a siege, while, as already explained (*cf.* pp. 11–12) it was almost impossible to force a battle on an evasive enemy. But the strategists of the day were not wont to seek battle,

unless at some great advantage, and the result was campaigns like that of 1691. Possibly that campaign taught Marlborough the futility of such strategy: he was certainly to show the world that real military genius could rise superior to the limitations which fettered William and Waldeck and even abler men like Luxemburg.

CHAPTER VII

MARLBOROUGH AND WILLIAM

MARLBOROUGH'S DISGRACE—IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE —THE BREST EXPEDITION—MARY'S DEATH AND ITS EFFECTS—THE ACT OF SETTLEMENT—THE PARTITION TREATIES—THE APPROACH OF WAR—THE GRAND ALLIANCE.

WITH the autumn of 1691 begins the period in Marlborough's career which is the real justification for all the unfavourable verdicts that have been passed on him. The charges against him have been grossly exaggerated, notably by Swift among the writers of his own day and by Macaulay among later historians, but even when reduced to more reasonable dimensions they amount to treachery. Once he had abandoned James in the cause of the Protestant religion and of the liberties of England, Marlborough needed to be unswervingly loyal to the new order if he were to vindicate the honesty of his motives. His correspondence with the Jacobite court was probably intended merely to secure an indemnity in case of a Jacobite restoration, but his personal safety might have been more straightforwardly secured by zealous endeavours to prevent that restoration. His mutinous grumblings, his responsibility for the hostile attitude adopted by Anne, his fomenting of the feud between English and Dutch officers, his encouragement to disaffection contributed to make the restoration of James a possibility. It is his actions between 1691–1695 which make him

himself the most telling witness for the prosecution when the sincerity of his conduct in 1688 is called in question.

Marlborough's dissatisfaction with his rewards had been increased by William's persistent refusal to grant him the Garter. Anne had urgently requested in August, 1691, that a vacant Garter might be conferred on Marlborough,[1] but the King would not gratify her petition. Another slight was William's refusal to give Marlborough the post of Master General of the Ordnance, vacant through Schomberg's death. It was perhaps the loss of the emoluments of this lucrative office, for which Marlborough was far better qualified than was Sidney on whom William bestowed it, which rankled most in Marlborough's mind and caused him to express his discontent quite unrestrainedly, to speak openly against the way Dutchmen were preferred to English officers,[2] declaring that things were as bad as in James's day when any Irishman was sure of employment if he could speak English, only that now Dutchmen took the place of Irishmen.[3] More than this Marlborough actually laid a definite complaint before William of the favours and grants bestowed upon Bentinck, Keppel, and other Dutch confidants of the King's. Such an open avowal, courageous if hardly judicious, was naturally all the more resented by William because it was so well justified, even if Marlborough's assertion that he had no personal grounds for complaint and was only speaking for the King's

[1] *Cf.* King William's Chest, ix., pp 143 and 144.
[2] *Cf.* Harleian MSS., 6544, ff. 66–67.
[3] *Cf.* Bonnet's report, Ranke, vi., p 177.

information and benefit, must have rung very hollow in its hearer's ears.

As yet, however, William, though thoroughly annoyed with Marlborough and already suspicious of his loyalty, did nothing.[1] Indeed Marlborough was named for employment in Flanders in the next campaign, though he roundly declared he would only serve there if in command of the British contingent, a post which rumour was giving to Ginckel. But it was at this juncture that, according to Macpherson and the *Life of James II*, he instigated Anne to write to James II assuring him of her penitence for her action in 1688 and beseeching his pardon. Her letter, written on December 1/11, 1691,[2] was hailed by James with great satisfaction as a really tangible proof of the sincerity of Churchill's assurances, hitherto regarded at St. Germain with considerable incredulity. That this letter meant anything more than this is not to be imagined: it committed Marlborough to nothing definite, but it was enough for William, for the action to which he proceeded early in January, 1692, is a clear proof, if proof were needed, that Marlborough's action had become known to him, probably that he had learnt

[1] That Marlborough was still on intimate terms with the King is proved by his not only returning from Holland in the King's yacht but accompanying him and Portland from Margate, where they had landed, to London. The King had been expected to land at Harwich, to which place his coach had gone, so that the journey had to be made in "an old coach drawn by cart horses" and this on reaching Shooter's Hill overturned. The King "escaped very well," but Lords Portland and Marlborough were "a little hurt." Fortunately the Royal coach arrived in time to allow the voyagers to resume the journey more safely and comfortably. *Cf.* Portland MSS., iii, p. 477.

[2] *Cf.* Clarke, *Life of James II.*, ii., pp. 477–498.

of Anne's letter.[1] In view of the threatened French invasion William wished to have none but officers whom he could trust implicitly in responsible military posts and if Marlborough had just been detected in correspondence with St. Germain he clearly could no longer be safely employed. Accordingly on January 10th/20th he was without any warning ordered to consider himself dismissed from the Army and forbidden the Court. His regiments were taken from him, the Life Guards being given to Lord Colchester, the Royal Fusiliers to George Hamilton, afterwards Earl of Orkney, while Tollemache was promoted to the vacancy on the General's list. In taking this drastic action William hoped that by driving away the Marlboroughs from Court, Anne would be freed from their influence but in this the step was a complete failure. Despite Marlborough's disgrace his wife continued to attend Anne at Court. Mary then (February 5th/15th) requested her sister to dismiss Lady Marlborough, and when Anne refused Mary issued orders to the Lord Chamberlain forbidding Lady Marlborough to remain at the Cockpit. On this Anne, more incensed and obstinate than ever, quitted the Cockpit herself for Sion House, the residence of the Duke of Somerset,[2] thus openly associating herself with the Marlboroughs

[1] The channel by which it must have become known to the King is easy to trace. Lady Fitzharding, one of Lady Marlborough's closest friends, was a sister of William's mistress, Elizabeth Villiers (subsequently Countess of Orkney). Sarah's characteristic imprudence caused her to let Lady Fitzharding know all that she and her husband were doing and Lady Fitzharding was in the habit of retailing to her sister the gossip of Anne's household.

[2] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iii., p. 489.

and defying her sister. The net result therefore of Marlborough's disgrace was to bring about a breach between Mary and her sister, which despite more than one attempt by Mary at a reconciliation remained unhealed. All overtures broke down against Anne's impregnable resolve not to part with her favourite.

But Marlborough's disgrace was more than an attack on his influence over Anne: it was a clear warning to possible conspirators and disloyalists that William was on the alert and would be deterred by no past services. And if an example was to be made Marlborough was the obvious victim. He was isolated as well as prominent. Russell and Godolphin were about his only friends—the former actually remonstrated with William on his behalf and Godolphin's anger at the treatment meted out to Marlborough was notorious[1]—and his only other associates seem to have been Shrewsbury and Montagu. In some quarters he was unpopular for his avarice[2] and the Jacobites distrusted him, believing not without reason that he was acting in the interests not of James but of "Sa Cadette" (*i.e.*, Anne). One report[3] attributed his disgrace to three causes: his making bad blood between Anne and the King, his attacks on the employment of foreign officers and men, and the intemperate and offensive language he had used against William himself. It is worth noting that this report does not mention correspondence with the exiled monarch, though that was among the causes which popular rumour assigned for his fall.[4] William

[1] *Cf* Burnet, ii., p. 92, and King William's Chest, xii., p 108.
[2] *Cf.* Denbigh MSS., p. 220. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iii., p 489, and Hatton Correspondence, ii., p. 170.

indeed did not condescend to make public any reasons for his action, though he told Bonnet, the Elector of Brandenburg's representative, that had he been a private person he would have challenged Marlborough to a duel, so abominably had he been treated by the Earl. Burnet has a story that Marlborough had betrayed to Louis, of course through James, William's intentions to attack Dunkirk, on which enterprise Marlborough himself was to be employed. The project certainly had to be abandoned because the French suddenly began to strengthen the garrison and fortifications, having evidently received a warning. That Marlborough should have betrayed an expedition which would have given him a chance of distinction is unthinkable. Still he admitted having told his wife about it and it was generally believed that Lady Marlborough was responsible for the information reaching Louis. Evelyn's Diary gives as the reason for Marlborough's fall that he had been found guilty of peculation and corruption, but the most satisfactory explanation is that which represents the King as telling Nottingham that he had disgraced Marlborough for fomenting discord and disaffection in the Army and for his correspondence with St. Germain, but adding "he has rendered such valuable service that I have no wish to press him too hard."[1]

Whatever William's motives for leniency may have been in January, by May the situation had become criti-

[1] *Cf.* Wolseley, ii., p 263. Bonnet's words are also worth quoting: "Toute la source de sa malheur vient du trop d'opinion qu'il avoit de sa mérite, et qu'on ne pourroit se passer de lui." Bonnet to the Elector, January 26th/February 5th, Ranke, vi., p. 177.

cal. William was in Holland, to which all available troops had been or were being sent, when it suddenly became known that a large French army had been collected in the Channel ports ready to invade England. A regular "scare" followed, the troops on their way to Holland were stopped, some battalions already there were recalled, the Militia were called out, an embargo was placed on shipping, and other precautions taken. Under the circumstances it was not unnatural that persons notoriously disaffected should be taken into custody. Arrested (May 3rd/13th), along with the Earls of Huntingdon and Lichfield and other prominent friends of the exiled dynasty, on a charge of "abetting and adhering to the King's enemies," Marlborough was brought before the Council on May 4th/14th and committed to the Tower. His correspondence with St. Germain would have been ample justification for his arrest, but the charge actually laid against him was only supported by the evidence of one Robert Young, a man of notoriously bad character, ultimately hanged for coining. Young produced letters of a treasonable character purporting to have been written by Marlborough and also documents signed by Marlborough, Lord Cornbury, Bishop Atterbury of Rochester, and others which contained a plan for the restoration of King James. It was perhaps fortunate for Marlborough that this should have been made the subject of the charge against him: it was easy enough to prove himself innocent of this accusation: charges might have been preferred against him which he would have found more inconvenient to meet.

The summer of 1692 Marlborough spent in the Tower; his wife was allowed to see him from time to

time and a few other people occasionally obtained leave to visit him. Within a few days of his arrest Russell's victory off Cape Barfleur (May 19th/29th) and the subsequent destruction of many of the fugitive vessels at Cherbourg and in the bay of La Hogue removed all danger of invasion, but even then Marlborough remained a prisoner. He made several ineffectual efforts to obtain his release, soliciting the good offices of Carmarthen and Devonshire, then Lord High Steward, before being brought before the King's Bench (June 15th/25th) on a writ of *habeas corpus*. In the meantime (June 13th/23rd) Young had broken down completely when cross-examined before the Lords of the Council, and this demonstration of the falseness of the alleged plot had led to the release of some of the other prisoners. Marlborough was treated more severely in that he was required to find bail for six thousand pounds for his appearance, for which sum he induced Shrewsbury, Halifax, and two other persons to become securities. By doing this Shrewsbury and Halifax offended the Court so much that they were forthwith struck off the Privy Council, from which Marlborough's name was at the same time removed.[1] In October Marlborough petitioned the King's Bench that his recognizances might be discharged, pointing out that as Young had been convicted for perjury it was unjust to treat him as still under suspicion, but he could not prevail on the Court to release him.[2]

[1] *Cf.* Carte MSS., 242, f. 94.

[2] He had already appealed to the Lords against his imprisonment (*cf.* S. P. Ireland, King's Letter Book, i., p 429, and iv., p 16), but though they considered the case they had come to no conclusion.

When Parliament met Marlborough hastened to bring the matter before the Lords as a case of privilege, and on November 7th/17th he, Scarsdale, and Huntingdon laid the facts before the House, with the result that the matter was referred to the Committee of Privileges. The Committee, however, failed to reach any definite conclusion, declaring that they could find no precedents for bailing Marlborough.[1] The House then proceeded to discuss the reasons for the commitment. The decision cleared up some disputed points of law but nothing was done to settle the particular case of Marlborough and his associates until William had the good sense to cancel the recognizances of his own accord.[2] He could see that as long as the cause of Marlborough's disgrace and imprisonment was not made public it was easy for the Earl to represent himself as being victimized, and Marlborough was already inconvenient enough without being given a useful grievance.

During the winter of 1692–1693 Marlborough's hand can be traced in various resolutions of the House of Lords aimed at embarrassing the Government. The Lords petitioned against the employment of foreigners as members of the Board of Ordnance, asked that none but English troops should be left in England for its defence, and that a native born subject of their Majesties might command the English troops.[3] When Ormonde requested to be appointed Governor of the Isle of Wight and was refused, one finds Marlborough

[1] *Cf.* Cal. S. P. Dom., 1691–2, p. 500.

[2] *Cf.* A. S. Turberville, *The House of Lords in the reign of William III.*, pp. 70–72.

[3] *Cf.* Lord's Journals, February 18/28, 169⅔.

inciting him to throw up all his offices as a protest.[1] Among the Whig peers there were some who felt that William had not done as much as he should for their party, to which they considered he really owed his throne, and it was by Marlborough that the flames of this discontent were sedulously fanned.[2] That during this period Marlborough was in constant communication with St. Germain seems clear, though as before there was a marked discrepancy between the liberality of his promises and the actual result.

This attitude of hostility and opposition Marlborough maintained for a considerable period. If his motive was, as has been suggested, to force William into employing him in order to silence him he was unsuccessful, for the campaigns of 1693 and 1694 went past without his being called on to cross the Channel, so that he had no share in the hard-fought struggle at Landen where the British troops earned credit even in defeat. That this was his motive is rather suggested by his action when Tollemache's disastrous repulse from Brest became known. He hastened to see Shrewsbury and through him to offer his services to the King. Shrewsbury's letter to William of June 22nd/July 2nd speaks of "what is here become a very great discourse—the popularity and convenience of receiving Lord Marlborough into your favour. He has been with me"—the letter goes on—"since the news [of Tollemache's defeat and death] to offer his service, with all the expressions of duty and fidelity imaginable. What I can say by way of persuasion on this subject will signify but little since I very well remember when your Majesty

[1] *Cf.* Denbigh MSS., p. 213. [2] *Cf.* Dalrymple, Part. III., Bk. I.

discoursed with me upon it in the spring you were sufficiently convinced of his usefulness. . . . It is so unquestionably his interest to be faithful that that single argument makes me not doubt it."[1] The only reply which William vouchsafed was as final as it was snubbing: "I do not think it for the good of my service to entrust him with the command of my troops," but Marlborough's offer of his services at this particular juncture is not without bearing upon the thorny question of his responsibility for the reverse at Camaret Bay.

The expedition which ended in that disaster was only a minor feature of the naval operations of 1694, the chief efforts of the Allied fleets being directed to the Mediterranean.[2] But up to the moment that Russell and the "Main Fleet" were ordered to the Straits an attack on Brest by his command had been contemplated.[3] Russell had accordingly reconnoitred Brest in the middle of May, but, as neither troops nor bomb-vessels had been available, he had been obliged to return without effecting anything beyond ascertaining that most of the Brest fleet had sailed for the Mediterranean. He then proceeded to Cadiz in pursuit but left a squadron behind under Lord Berkeley to escort to Brest the troops allotted to the descent. These, some seven thousand in all, were commanded by Tollemache, an officer who had earned distinction in Ireland and at Landen. The expedition arriving off Brest on June 6th/16th found the place far stronger than had been

[1] Shrewsbury Correspondence, pp. 44–47.

[2] *Cf England in the Mediterranean*, chapters xxvi and xxvii.

[3] *Cf.* House of Lords MSS., i., p. 459.

expected: fortifications had been erected to cover the proposed landing-place in Camaret Bay; and large bodies of troops were to be seen. Under these circumstances it would have been prudent to abandon an enterprise the success of which depended mainly on finding the enemy unprepared. So far as it had caused troops to be detached to Brest who would otherwise have been available to re-enforce French armies in other quarters it had achieved a useful purpose already. Indeed Tollemache's conduct in persisting with the landing is described by Lord Wolseley as "a piece of unpardonable folly." Tollemache paid for his error of judgment with his life and the expedition returned home having suffered over a thousand casualties.

Marlborough's connection with this disastrous repulse lies in the fact that Clarke's *Life of James II.*,[1] quotes a letter alleged to have been written by Marlborough to Sackville, the chief Jacobite agent in London, which was as follows:

It is but this day it came to my knowledge what I now send you, which is that the bomb vessels and the twelve regiments now encamped at Portsmouth, together with the two Marine Regiments, are to be commanded by Talmach and are designed to burn the harbour of Brest and to destroy the men of war there; this would be great advantage to England but no consideration can, or ever shall, hinder me from letting you know what I think may be for your service, so you may make what use you think best of this intelligence, which you may depend upon as exactly true.

[1] Vol. ii., p. 522.

The original of this has never come to light, nor has that of Sackville's covering letter of May 4th to Lord Melfort. What has been found among the Jacobite documents preserved in the Scots College at Paris is a French version of the deciphered English letters. This is given (in English) by Macpherson (i , p. 487) who adds to Clarke's version the following words:

But I must conjure you in your own interest to let no one know it but the Queen and the bearer of this letter. Russell sails tomorrow with forty ships, the rest being not yet paid; but it is said that in ten days the rest of the fleet will follow and at the same time the land forces. I have endeavoured to learn this some time ago from Admiral Russell but he always denied to me, though I am very sure that he knew the design for more than six weeks. This gives me a very bad sign of this man's intentions. I shall be very pleased to learn that this letter comes safe to your hands.

Colonel Parnell[1] submits this letter and Sackville's covering letter to a searching analysis. He points out that the phrase in Sackville's letter, "For the love of God, let it be kept a secret even from Lord Middleton," is rather suspicious. Middleton as a Protestant was the man with whom Marlborough and Sackville were more likely to communicate than with Melfort, a Roman Catholic, who moreover was out of favour with James; further, that the news should be kept from Lord Middleton is not exactly consistent with the permission to make "what use you think best of this intelligence." Another somewhat curious feature is the importance attached by Sackville to intelligence which can hardly

[1] E. H. R., 1897, pp. 270–274.

have been new. Troops had been collected near Portsmouth since the beginning of April and it had long been current talk that they were to be used in a descent on the coast of France. That no information should have reached Versailles before the beginning of May is in itself highly unlikely, even if there were not in existence in the military archives in Paris[1] a letter from Louis to Vauban dated April 4th/14th and ordering him to take precautions for the defence of Brest. Moreover, one Floyd, Groom of the Bedchamber to James II., had been in London in the spring and had had interviews with Shrewsbury, Russell, Marlborough, and Godolphin.[2] The story goes that Floyd failed to extract any definite information from any of them except Godolphin, from whom he heard of the intended attack on Brest, and his information apparently reached St. Germain on May 1st/11th. It is also admitted in the *Life of James II.* that an early warning of the design against Brest had been sent by Lord Arran.

Taking the date of Marlborough's alleged letter as May 4th/14th[3] and allowing some days for it to reach St. Germain, the information can hardly have been before Louis till May 8th/18th at the earliest.[4] Accordingly, even if the letter be accepted as genuinely Marlborough's, Macaulay's assertion that Marlborough was responsible for the defeat and death of Tollemache may be confidently rejected. This letter was not the cause of the French being ready to receive the attack; at most

[1] *Cf.* Lord Wolseley, ii., pp 314–315. [2] *Cf.* Macpherson, i., p 483.

[3] That May 4th is O. S. not N.S. may be assumed from his speaking of Russell sailing "tomorrow"; Russell actually sailed May 5th/15th.

[4] *Cf.* Wolseley.

it confirmed information already received. Besides the letter of April 4th/14th to Vauban Louis had written on May 1st/11th, saying that information had been received from several quarters and bidding Vauban neglect no precautions.[1] Clearly then whatever Marlborough had done Tollemache would have found Brest prepared and on the alert. The charge against Marlborough thus shrinks to less heinous dimensions than Macaulay gives it, but it is bad enough even so. Even if, as seems almost certain, he knew that Godolphin had already betrayed the secret,[2] to have given information to the enemies of his country in time of war was an offence for which he might have been shot. Nothing can make it less than actual treason. That his motive was merely to gain credit at St. Germain may be admitted. Macaulay's suggestion—borrowed from Clarke it is true—that he was jealous of Tollemache and wanted to ruin his reputation by insuring his defeat has been effectively dealt with by Sir Leslie Stephen who wrote: "Such insight into secret motives is only granted to men of Macaulay's omniscience."[3] There is not a shred of evidence to support it and it is crediting Marlborough with nothing short of prophetic powers to suggest that he could have foreseen the rashness with

[1] Cf. *Marlborough and the Brest Expedition*, by Colonel E. M. Lloyd. E. H. R., ix., pp. 133–134.

[2] It must not be forgotten either that Marlborough, unemployed and out of favour, was in no position to be in possession of valuable information. For such intelligence he must have depended on Godolphin with whom he was in sufficiently close touch to know whether the information had already been sent to St. Germain when he wrote the incriminating letter.

[3] *Cf.* D. N. B., article "Churchill, J."

which Tollemache behaved. For the repulse and loss of life it is the unfortunate Tollemache himself who must be held responsible. All Marlborough did was that, with a great parade of sending most valuable intelligence, he forwarded to St. Germain information which he knew to be harmless because already in the possession of his correspondent.[1] Even reduced to these dimensions the incident is the meanest episode in his career

William's refusal to employ Marlborough is easy to understand, but before the next campaign opened one of the strongest obstacles had been removed by Mary's sudden and unexpected death (December 28, 1694 O. S.). Mary had been a good Queen to England and a good wife to William and her death certainly deprived her husband of his chief hold on the loyalty of his subjects. Not yet thirty-three, far more robust than her husband, she might well have been expected to outlive one so frail, and it is tempting to speculate how that would have affected Marlborough's career. The immediate result was that it became most desirable that William should be reconciled to his sister-in-law, now his heiress. As heiress to a man of William's enfeebled frame Anne was far nearer the throne than during Mary's lifetime, and whatever designs Marlborough may have cherished while Mary lived he could see clearly that his interest lay in promoting the reconciliation William desired. Indeed the first step came from Anne, apparently at the prompting of Marlborough and Sunderland. To

[1] Colonel Parnell actually pronounces the letter of May 4th/14th a forgery of Melfort's intended to restore his credit at St. Germain, but this theory is more ingenious than convincing.

Anne's letter of condolence William replied by visiting her and the re-establishment of friendly relations was followed by St. James's Palace being given to her for a residence, military guards were again placed over her house, and the marks of respect usually shown to the members of the royal family were once more paid her. For these improved relations rumour ascribed no small share of the responsibility to Marlborough, and Shrewsbury wrote "our friend [Marlborough], who has no small credit with her [Anne], seems very resolved to contribute to the continuance of this. . . . I do not see he is likely at present to get much by it, not having yet kissed the King's hand; but his reversion is very fair and great."[1]

In the summer of 1696 the discovery of Sir John Fenwick's Jacobite plot was followed by Fenwick's turning King's evidence and bringing accusations of complicity against many leading men, among them Marlborough. Fortunately for the men Fenwick accused, none of them, whatever their communications with St. Germain, had ever had any dealings with him and when William examined the prisoner he told him straight out that his confession appeared to be a contrivance intended to screen the real plotters by throwing suspicion on men in whom the King had good reason to place confidence. In taking up this line William cannot have been ignorant of the true relations between his ministers and the exiled court; Shrewsbury actually admitted that he had been in correspondence with Lord Middleton, but it would have been impolitic to act against them, and to proceed against Marlborough

[1] Shrewsbury Correspondence, p. 220.

would have imperilled the good relations recently re-established between the King and Anne and would have served no useful purpose. The war had by this time taken a turn in favour of the Allies, Namur had been recovered, the power of Louis XIV. to assist the Jacobites had been sensibly diminished, Russell's operations in the Mediterranean had greatly improved our position at sea, the discovery of the plots for William's assassination had produced a reaction in his favour and a revival of anti-Jacobite feeling. Knowing that Fenwick would produce no direct evidence Marlborough could take strong action against him. With his habitual coolness and self-possession he assured the House of Lords of the falsity of Fenwick's charges. "Nobody can wonder," he said, "that a man whose head is in danger should try to save himself by accusing others. I assure your Lordships that, since the accession of his present Majesty, I have had no intercourse with Sir John on any subject whatever, and this I declare on my word of honour."[1] The occasion of this declaration was the presentation to the Lords of the Bill of Attainder against Fenwick, for which, thanks to Marlborough's vigorous support, Prince George of Denmark was induced to record his vote; in the end the Bill passed by a narrow majority.

But if Marlborough had survived the ordeal of Fenwick's accusations he was still to wait some time for employment. However, with the readmission of Sunderland to office in April, 1697, Marlborough's chances distinctly improved. Early in 1698 it was decided to provide Anne's only surviving son, the nine-

[1] *Cf* Shrewsbury Correspondence, p. 438.

year-old Duke of Gloucester, with a separate establishment and it was Marlborough who was selected to be his Governor with a salary of two thousand pounds a year. Sunderland, Shrewsbury, and Keppel had all pressed his claims on the King and the appointment was sure to commend itself strongly to Anne. On April 19th/29th, 1698, Marlborough kissed hands upon his appointment and William is reported to have said: "My Lord, teach him to be like yourself and he will not want for accomplishments," a generous, if at the same time carefully limited, compliment. Within a couple of months Marlborough was re-admitted to the Privy Council (June 11th/21st), and his restoration to favour was made still more evident by his selection as one of the Lords Justices (July 16th/26th) on William's departure for Holland.

One interesting feature of Marlborough's position as Governor of the Duke of Gloucester's household was that it brought him into close relations with Bishop Burnet, who rather to Anne's annoyance had been made tutor to the young Prince. One result of this is to be seen in the account of Marlborough given in the *History* which is much more favourable than the estimate in the *Rough Draft*. It is not necessary to ascribe this to subservience or flattery on Burnet's part, though the version the *History* gives is much affected, even to some extent inspired, by Burnet's intercourse with a man who by universal consent had the power to make himself charming. It is only fair to both men to assume that with closer acquaintance Burnet came to know Marlborough better and that his later and more favourable estimate is a genuine testimony.

From his readmission to the Privy Council to the end of William's reign Marlborough's position was one of growing importance. Without being given any definite office until the summer of 1701, he was frequently consulted by William on affairs of state, though their personal relations never became cordial and Marlborough wrote to Shrewsbury in May, 1700, "the King's coldness to me still continues." In the debates over the reduction of the Army which followed the Peace of Ryswick Marlborough strove hard to induce the Parliament to listen to reason but with little success. In the face of the unsettled condition of Europe, of the unsatisfied ambitions of Louis XIV., and of the imminent danger of conflict over the Spanish succession, nothing could have been more unwise than the wholesale reductions for which clamorous demands were raised both by Whigs, who hated standing armies on "constitutional" grounds, and by Tories, who opposed them partly because of their recollections of Cromwell and partly to annoy William. Marlborough had been foremost in the outcry against the employment of foreigners, but he took no part in the discussion over the retention of the Dutch Guards, and he steadfastly opposed the wholesale disbanding of the English regiments of whose services he could see that the country might very well soon be once more in need. But while giving a general support to the administration he did not break with the Tories, with whom he had as yet been associated. His intimacy with Godolphin was strengthened by the marriage of his eldest daughter, Henrietta, to Godolphin's only son, Francis (March, 1699), while his younger and favourite daughter, Anne,

married Lord Spencer, Sunderland's eldest son, about a year later. This second match had not at first been liked by Marlborough as Spencer professed republican views. But Sunderland pressed the match, Godolphin used his influence in its favour and Lady Marlborough, who had always been reckoned more favourable than her husband to the Whigs, was a personal friend of Lady Sunderland and her influence finally overcame Marlborough's opposition.

Portland's resignation in the summer of 1700 removed from Court an influence constantly hostile to Marlborough, while with Keppel, now Earl of Albemarle who had replaced Portland in William's confidence, he had always been friendly. In October one finds Marlborough soliciting and obtaining a place at the Board of Admiralty for his brother George, and though he incurred William's displeasure by supporting strongly Prince George of Denmark's claim to a sum of eighty-five thousand pounds which William had guaranteed him during the war of 1689 between Denmark and Sweden, his advocacy of this claim earned him Anne's warmly expressed gratitude for a success she described as "wholly owing to his kindness."[1] While ready to please William Marlborough had too keen a sense of his own interests to risk losing the favour of William's heiress, and this was all the more important as Lady Marlborough had just resigned her position as Lady-in-Waiting to the Princess. This step was probably a mistake as Anne was always liable to be dominated by the person with whom she was most in contact and continued personal intercourse was needed to retain in-

[1] Cf. *The Conduct*, p. 287.

fluence over her. But Lady Marlborough's arrogance was already beginning to make itself felt in her relations with Anne. Overbearing and quarrelsome she seems to have on several occasions failed to conceal her contempt for Anne's attainments and abilities, and to have been unwisely candid in her expressions. Believing herself absolutely secure of her influence over Anne she thought she could go to any lengths with her, whereas Anne, for all her inability to stand alone, retained enough selfrespect and individuality to resent her favourite's candour and impertinence. For the time at least her scheme of controlling Anne through the poor relation whom she had recommended to the Princess as Bedchamber Woman worked well enough. Abigail Hill, though as sly and cunning as Lady Marlborough was unrestrained and impetuous, was at first faithful enough to the cousin to whom she owed her post.

While William was in Holland in 1700 Marlborough was again made one of the Lords Justices, any ill effect caused by his support of Prince George's claims in the previous year having been removed by the neutral attitude he had adopted when Parliament was discussing the King's Irish grants, a subject on which he had made many complaints in his opposition days. It was during William's absence in Holland that the Duke of Gloucester, always a sickly child, died (July 30th/August 9th, 1700). The death of Marlborough's pupil opened the whole question of the succession and made the introduction of the Act of Settlement necessary. In the negotiations over this Act, passed by a Parliament in which the Tories were in the majority, Marlborough played an important part for he induced

Anne to agree to the terms, thereby doing much to make it acceptable to the Tories. He had, when the new House of Commons met, used his influence to get Robert Harley, a distant connection of his wife's, elected Speaker and Harley undoubtedly helped to facilitate the passage of the Bill.

On the very day (June 1st/12th, 1701) that the Act of Settlement was passed Marlborough had been appointed to the position in which he was destined to win himself imperishable renown and to do his country those services which constitute his claim to be remembered with gratitude, services which more than balance the discreditable conduct of which he had been guilty. He was appointed to command the English contingent which had just been put under orders for Holland, the Dutch having formally requested the assistance of the ten thousand troops which the treaty of March, 1678, pledged England to furnish.

The Dutch had asked for this assistance because, on the death of Charles II. of Spain (October 22nd/November 1st, 1700), Louis XIV. had thrown over the Partition Treaty, and accepting the will of the late King had had his grandson, Philip, Duke of Anjou, proclaimed King of Spain. Not that this repudiation by Louis of his obligations had led to any immediate counter-stroke from the other parties to the treaty. William would have readily drawn the sword there and then could he have convinced his Tory Parliament that England's interests, political and commercial, were directly endangered by a Bourbon's presence on the Spanish throne, but the Tories, disliking William and disliking Holland, hostile to the Army, alarmed by the heavy

taxation and by the existence of a National Debt, refused to stir a foot to preserve the balance of power; some of them indeed declared they preferred Philip of Anjou's succession to a Partition Treaty which would have given France Sicily and Sardinia, and so greatly improved her position in the Mediterranean. But where conciliatory conduct might have enabled Louis to secure even the whole Spanish inheritance for his grandson, with no more opposition than the rather feeble resistance which the Emperor was able to offer, he soon drove both Holland and England into taking up arms. The Dutch he roused by marching troops into the Spanish Netherlands and seizing the "Barrier fortresses" assigned to the Dutch at the Treaty of Ryswick. The few Englishmen whose political vision extended beyond the British Isles to include a grasp of Continental affairs were alarmed by this sufficiently clear indication of Louis's intentions, but it needed something more to bring home to the mass of their countrymen what the unchecked predominance of France would mean. The news that French ships were being admitted freely to trade with the Spanish colonies in America, that jealously guarded preserve into which English merchants longed for admission, opened the eyes of many, even among the Tories who had recently impeached Portland and the other ministers who had been concerned in the negotiations for the Partition Treaty. This impeachment, a mere party and personal move, had failed completely, though it is strange to find Marlborough among the minority in the Lords who recorded a violent protest against the acquittal of the accused. His motives are difficult to understand; he

knew well enough that the Partition Treaty had been an honest attempt on William's part to settle the Spanish succession question peaceably on terms favourable to England; he had already had sufficient diplomatic experience to know what a delicate matter such a negotiation was and that there would not be much chance of success if the proposals had to be submitted in advance to the English Privy Council, let alone to the Commons. The most probable, albeit not very creditable, explanation of his action is this personal hostility to Portland.

In March, 1701, William had laid before Parliament a statement of the perilous position of Holland and informed the Houses that the Dutch were asking for the help promised by the treaty of 1678; but the Commons had not yet been prepared to approve of any definite action. Two months later even Tories were becoming alarmed, and before Parliament was prorogued (June 14th/25th, 1701) the Commons had pledged themselves to "assist effectively his Majesty to support his Allies in maintaining the liberty of Europe." This promise was made good by the grant of liberal subsidies and twelve battalions then serving in Ireland received orders to embark for Holland, where they arrived before the end of June.[1]

The choice of Marlborough to command this contingent, and still more his appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United Provinces (July 28th/August 8th, 1701), indicated very clearly that William was conscious of failing health. The choice was destined to be amply justified, yet it shows

[1] *Cf.* Millner, p. 4.

William as possessed of no small insight into character and not less foresight into the conditions likely to prevail under the next ruler. By selecting as his successor in command and in diplomacy the man who was going to dominate Anne's councils William went far to pledge England to continue his policy. But if William was selecting a man who had shown great promise and had impressed his contemporaries with his capacities as a general, Marlborough had never commanded more than a small force. Blenheim, Ramillies, and the forcing of Villars's "non plus ultra" near Bouchain may make Marlborough's appointment seem obvious today. Sedgemoor and Walcourt, Cork and Kinsale, constituted a far less cogent claim to so important an employment. Nor is the selection less creditable to William personally. He had the best of reasons for disliking the subject to whom he was giving so splendid a position and such chances of distinction.

As Commander-in-Chief Marlborough enjoyed most extensive powers: he could make regulations for the government of the troops under him and for their punishment by courts-martial: he was also empowered to grant commissions to fill up vacancies as they occurred. He was thus in a better position than was Wellington a century later when he could not make a promotion without reference to the Commander-in-Chief at home, and was equally dependent on the same authority for the subordinates appointed to command under him and the units who formed his army. Marlborough was not liable to have a Sir William Erskine or a General Slade[1] inflicted upon him or to have sea-

[1] *Cf.* Oman, *Wellington's Army*, p. 151.

soned veterans withdrawn from his army. And it was an enormous advantage that plenipotentiary diplomatic powers were entrusted to the commanding general, while Marlborough's economical soul cannot but have rejoiced in the lavish remuneration which his ambassadorial position brought him, £100 a week for his "ordinary entertainment," with £1500 to provide his "equipage," and plate worth £2500.

The work which awaited Marlborough at The Hague (July 3rd/14th, 1701) may be described as the negotiation of a "Grand Alliance" between the Emperor, the United Provinces, and England. As yet neither of the "Maritime Powers" had proceeded to any overt act of hostility: the backward condition of their naval and military preparations, especially England's, put that out of the question, while Louis still hoped to outwit his neighbours by diplomacy and obtain a free hand against the Emperor in Italy. But the negotiations between Louis and William, who had gone over to Holland with Marlborough, showed that no satisfaction was to be expected from France. It proved difficult, however, to reconcile the conflicting wishes of the Emperor and the United Provinces, and Marlborough was determined not to commit England prematurely to any step of which public opinion was likely to disapprove. He wrote to Godolphin, on October 10th/21st, about the suggestion that he should in virtue of his plenipotentiary powers ratify the main treaty outright: "I am so persuaded that the doing of this, by his Majesty's authority, would prove so fatal to himself and the kingdom, that I should desire to be recalled, for, before God, I will die sooner than do so fatal a thing."

It was not from any particular regard for constitutional technicalities that Marlborough hesitated to use his powers, but he saw clearly that if the Grand Alliance were to be a solid compact the English nation must not be committed to it except with full knowledge and approval. If ministers at home were not allowed the final word over the treaties they might repudiate the obligations undertaken by their representative abroad. Clearly as Marlborough now realized the wisdom of William's policy and saw that the true interests of England were bound up with those of Holland he knew that the policy would only be popular if it wore a thoroughly English aspect, a Dutch dress would be fatal to its chances of obtaining general support. Hence his insistence that the main treaty constituting the Grand Alliance which was signed on August 27th/September 7th, 1701, should be submitted to the Lords Justices of England for final ratification and that the clauses settling the contingents and subsidies which England was to find should be sanctioned by the Commons. "I think," he wrote to Secretary Hedges, "by this method we shall have the Parliament on our side and gain a greater number of men than the other way."

Acting on this general principle Marlborough's usual procedure was to draw up a draft treaty, settling all details, and submit it for ratification to the ministers at home. In one case only he utilized his plenipotentiary powers to conclude a final bargain and then he was dealing with the erratic Charles XII. of Sweden and delay was dangerous. Louis was trying to enlist Charles on his side· England's aim was to prevent this and also to maintain peace between Sweden and Denmark, from

which latter country it was hoped to hire 12,000 men. By paying 200,000 crowns down and pledging England to guarantee the payment of another 300,000 by Holland, Marlborough extracted from Charles a promise not to enter into any league with France and thus was able to secure the desired Danish contingent.

Marlborough's attention was meanwhile occupied also with looking after the British contingent in Holland, to which five regiments of cavalry and another six battalions of infantry had been added, while he had to endeavour to reconcile the Tories to the policy of which he was now the advocate. It was a difficult task; the Hanoverian succession was as much as they could digest: William's foreign policy and the prospect of a Continental war were proving too tough for them when Louis came to William's help in the most convincing fashion. On the death (September 6th/17th, 1701) of James II. he promptly recognized the Prince of Wales as James III., deliberately repudiating the obligations into which he had entered at Ryswick and performing the almost incredible feat of making William positively popular in England. This action facilitated greatly the acceptance by the Commons of the Grand Alliance, even though it definitely pledged England to obtain satisfaction for the Emperor's claims on the Spanish succession and fixed her contingent at 40,000, the Emperor producing 90,000 and the Dutch 10,000. The Tories were as furious with Louis as were the Whigs and when William recalled his Ambassador from Paris and ordered the French Ambassador at St. James's to quit London forthwith his action was thoroughly popular. Taking advantage of the indignation aroused

by Louis's act William dissolved the Parliament (November), thinking to get rid of his uncongenial Tory ministers. To this action Marlborough was opposed. Though as yet not very successful in winning over his friends to William's policy he still hoped to bring them round. He persuaded Godolphin to write a letter in which he represented the Tories as determined to support the coming war, but he could not divert William from his purpose.

The elections proved all that William could desire. The anti-foreign feeling usually so strong an asset of the Tories had been diverted from its usual channels and expressed itself in the return of a House predominantly Whig. The treaties which Marlborough had arranged were ratified without difficulty and ample supplies were voted. Whigs replaced Tories in the principal offices, even Godolphin had to resign his Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Preparations were pushed on vigorously both by land and sea; new regiments were raised, some of those unwisely disbanded in 1697 were reformed, those which had escaped disbanding were augmented to a war footing, and re-enforcements were being hurried over to Holland when on February 21st/March 4th, 1702, William met with the accident which proved fatal to his feeble frame. Within a fortnight of William's fall from his horse, Anne was reigning in his stead.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS

THE NEW REIGN—1702 IN FLANDERS—SECURING THE MEUSE—DUTCH DEPUTIES—VENLOO AND LIÈGE—THE DUKEDOM OF MARLBOROUGH—1703—OBSTRUCTIONS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS—VIENNA IN PERIL.

As William lay on his death-bed he had at least the satisfaction of knowing that his great work of resistance to the aggression of Louis XIV. would not perish with him, since England stood committed to the war and Marlborough's influence over the new Queen might be counted upon to keep England true to her obligations. Anne's first act was to send Marlborough over to Holland "to give the States full assurances of her maintaining the alliances that had been concluded by the late King,"[1] thereby greatly reassuring the Dutch, whom William's death had thrown into consternation. Marlborough took this opportunity to concert plans for the coming campaign. However, his stay at The Hague was brief for there was much to be done in England.

Anne had, as Burnet says, "lived at a great distance" with the Whigs, and her choice of ministers clearly showed her preference for the Tories, whose leader Nottingham became Secretary of State, while from the new Privy Council Somers and Halifax were excluded. But, with Marlborough pledged to the war, the country at large still indignant with Louis's recog-

[1] Burnet, v., p. 3.

nition of the Pretender, and a Whig majority in Parliament, Nottingham and his friends were impotent to prevent the declaration of war which was published on May 4th/15th. A week later Marlborough started for The Hague. He had already received the long-coveted Garter and the post of Captain General of the English forces at home and abroad, while Lady Marlborough was appointed Mistress of the Robes and Ranger of Windsor Park, which office carried with it the Great Lodge as a residence. These favours clearly indicated the Queen's firm attachment to Marlborough and before leaving England he had prevailed upon the somewhat reluctant Godolphin to become Lord Treasurer. Burnet's story is that Marlborough had "said he could not go beyond the seas to command our armies, unless the Treasury was put in his [Godolphin's] hands, for then he was sure that remittances would be punctually made to him." Certainly Marlborough could go overseas feeling content as to affairs at home.

But the situation which greeted him on the Continent was not satisfactory. Their seizure of the Spanish Netherlands had placed the French in an advantageous position; before a shot had been fired they were at the gates of Holland, the fortresses on the Upper and Middle Meuse, Maastricht alone excepted, were in their hands, and their force in the Netherlands, ninety thousand strong, considerably outnumbered the available troops of the Allies. The unprepared state of the Empire, the embarrassments of the Emperor, who found himself simultaneously committed to considerable operations in Italy and hampered by a Hungarian

insurrection, and the defection of the Elector of Cologne who had thrown in his lot with France, increased Marlborough's difficulties. The French had occupied the Electorate of Cologne and thus threatened the communications between Holland and Vienna. Their possession of Kaiserwerth in particular, "a mean place but well fortified,"[1] menaced the dominions of the States General for "their places on the Waal not being in the best condition of defence"[2] were "laid open to the excursions of the garrison." The first task before the Allies, therefore, was the reduction of this fortress, to which before the end of April siege was laid by twenty-five thousand men, including three regiments of the Scots Brigade in the Dutch service, under the Prince of Nassau-Saarbrucken. To cover the siege the Earl of Athlone, the Ginckel of the Irish wars, was collecting the main body of the Allies, including the British contingent, at Cranenburg between Nimuegen and Cleves, the main body of the French, under Boufflers, being at Xanten, "some five leagues to our front"[3] in a South-Easterly direction. Being on the opposite bank of the Rhine to Kaiserwerth, Boufflers would have exposed his communications had he crossed that river to come directly to the assistance of the hard-pressed garrison, but at the end of May he suddenly took the offensive and made a dash on Nimuegen. Had he succeeded Boufflers would have cut off Athlone's "provisions, ammunition, and forage,"[4] and he was within an ace of success. Athlone was nearly surprised "for want of good intelligence" (Kane). Outnumbered

[1] Brodrick, p. 11. [2] Lediard, i., p. 154. [3] Kane, p. 31.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

by nearly two to one, he was only warned in time to beat a hasty but skilful retreat under the guns of Nimuegen (May 30th/June 10th), in which the French cavalry pressed his rear-guard closely. But this post of honour had been assigned to the British who behaved extremely well,[1] and in the end the French drew off, having suffered one thousand casualties to the Allies' two hundred and retired by Cleves to Gennep (June 1st/12th). Here with his left covered by the Meuse Boufflers awaited the Allies' next move. One reason for his relapse into inactivity was that on June 4th/15th Kaiserwerth had at last fallen. This set free eight thousand of the besiegers; the rest moving up the Rhine to clear the Electorate of Cologne of the other French garrisons.[2]

On arriving at The Hague Marlborough had first to overcome the difficulties as to the supreme command raised by the Dutch, who were not prepared to let him take rank over their Veldt Marshal,[3] and it was only with much trouble that Heinsius persuaded his countrymen to put their troops under the English general. And even then he had to suffer the presence with his army of two Dutch Deputies, Baron de Heyd and Herr Guildermalsen,[4] civilians with powers of obstruction as unlimited as their inability to understand war. On June 21st/July 2nd he left The Hague for Nimuegen where he found himself at the head of some 60,000 men with 70 guns.[5] Of this force over a fifth was British, the contingent consisting of seven regiments of cavalry under Generals Lumley and Ross and fourteen bat-

[1] *Cf.* Portland MSS. iv., p. 41.
[2] *Cf.* Parker, p. 77.
[3] Cf. Portland MSS. iv., p. 37.
[4] *Cf.* Parker, p. 78.
[5] Millner, p. 18.

talions of infantry, divided into three brigades.[1] To this contingent was attached a train of 34 guns, 4 howitzers, and 18 pontoons, more than half the artillery of the army.

Though Boufflers' force slightly outnumbered his own[2] Marlborough was fully resolved to take the offensive, wishing, as Kane suggests, "to give a bold stroke at first setting out to fix a reputation." Moreover, he saw that the undue extension of the French lines offered a chance of taking Boufflers at a disadvantage. Unable to get Dutch consent to an invasion of Brabant, which they feared would expose to Boufflers the country between the Rhine and Nimuegen, he eventually won their assent to a crossing of the Meuse below Grave. This he calculated would threaten Boufflers' communications with Brabant and would force him to quit his position between Meuse and Rhine, whereby the menace to the Dutch frontier would be removed and Nassau-Saarbrücken's operations against the Electorate of Cologne greatly facilitated. But, as he explained to Godolphin,[3] "the fears the States have of Nimuegen and the passage of the Rhine hinders the advantage of having the superiority"; had the invasion of Brabant been carried out the French "must then have had the disadvantage of governing themselves by our motions, whereas we are now obliged to mind them." His grasp of the advantage of a bold initiative which forces the enemy to abandon his own

[1] Brodrick, p. 40.

[2] The French had 130 squadrons to 120, 80 battalions as against 76, and 113 guns to 70 (Lediard, i., p. 169).

[3] *Cf.* to Godolphin, July 2nd/13th and 9th/20th.

designs and attempt to parry the assailant's strokes stands out clearly in these letters, but the obstructiveness of the Dutch Deputies had thus early declared itself as not the least serious obstacle in his path.

However, on June 26th/July 7th a move was made across the Waal and bridges were laid across the Meuse below Grave, a great show being made of collecting forage from the left bank as though he intended to stay where he was for some time[1] which contributed largely to deceive the enemy. On July 15th/26th the passage of the Meuse from North to South was made and marching rapidly forward, Marlborough crossed the frontier of the Bishopric of Liège near Hamont (July 19th/30th) and took post at St. Hubert's Lille (July 20th/31st). This move had the effects he had foreseen. Boufflers, surprised and alarmed at finding Marlborough between him and home, called to him the fourteen thousand men under Tallard hitherto near Dusseldorf and moved up the Meuse to Ruremond where he crossed, to find himself within three leagues of the Allied army "in great perplexity to get by us" (Kane). His difficulty was that to reach the lines he had constructed in Flanders, he must cross a heath close to Marlborough's camp and could hardly avoid being brought to battle, whereas if he stayed where he was or continued his move up the right bank of the Meuse he would give Marlborough the chance to demolish unhindered the ungarrisoned French lines. In this predicament Boufflers ventured on the dangerous expedient of a night-march, having first "made a great forage which looked as if they designed to continue some time in their camp."[2] But

[1] Kane, p. 34. [2] Parker, p 80.

Marlborough was not easily taken in and ordered his troops to lie on their arms all night, ready "to fall on the enemy as they passed the health." All was ready for the attack and the enemy was just entering the heath when the Dutch Deputies begged Marlborough to desist.

This [writes Parker] greatly surprised him, as they had agreed to his scheme the night before. But being a man of great temper and prudence and being determined not to do anything this first campaign without their approbation, at their earnest intreaty he desisted. Whereupon the tents and baggage were sent for and the army pitched their camp again. However, he desired that they would ride out with him to see the enemy pass the heath, which they and most of the general officers did and saw them hurrying over it in the greatest confusion and disorder imaginable; upon this they all acknowledged that they had lost a fair opportunity of giving the enemy a fatal blow.

Lost beyond recall, however, the opportunity had been. Boufflers profited by the Dutch Deputies' ill-timed intervention to get behind the Demer lines and shortly afterwards was joined by Tallard, the junction, making him several thousands stronger than his opponents. Still the evacuation of Spanish Guelderland was a substantial advantage to the Allies and allowed Marlborough to reinforce his field army with seven squadrons and ten battalions of the unnecessarily large garrison which Dutch timidity had till then forced him to immobilize at Maastricht.[1] Thereupon the Allied army advanced to Peer (July 25th/August 5th) but

[1] M. to Godolphin, July 13th/24th.

rather than commit his men to a direct assault on the strong French position Marlborough had recourse to stratagem. A convoy of bread-waggons from Grave was sent by a route close within reach of Boufflers. The French Marshal, "a good man enough to command a flying camp, surprise a post or bombard a city, though the office of a general, which requires great judgment as well as valour, was too much for him,"[1] fell into the trap. He moved North to intercept the convoy but was barely across the Demer before Marlborough moved swiftly out to Helchteren and placed himself between the point for which Boufflers was making and the Demer lines (August 11th/22nd). Boufflers, seeing his retreat threatened, halted in some enclosed country and let the convoy pass. Once again Marlborough tricked him. A move back to Peer (August 12th/23rd) with the convoy's escort under Opdam following some little distance behind, enticed Boufflers from the safety of the enclosures into the open plains. Out he came at the very place Marlborough had anticipated[2] to find, not Opdam at his mercy, but Marlborough ready for battle. Realizing he could not regain the enclosures without risking the loss of his rear-guard Boufflers "made the best of things and formed up for action," though his left was badly placed owing to marshy ground. A brisk cannonade was opened by both sides and Marlborough had issued his orders for the attack when once again the intervention of timorous Dutchmen saved Boufflers. "We had all the advantage a tired, disorderly and inferior army could give to good troupes," wrote Row of the Scots Fusiliers[3] "but the

[1] Ledıard, i., 174. [2] Parker, p. 82. [3] Mar. MSS., p 226.

States were against fighting," arguing that the day was too far spent, it being five o'clock in the afternoon. Boufflers welcomed this respite. "Not being desirous of battle," says Millner, "he joyfully embraced the canopy of night," and slipped away in the darkness. When morning came not a Frenchman could be seen save the last squadrons of the rear-guard, covering Boufflers' retreat to the Demer. A sharp action followed in which Wood's Horse (now 3rd D. G.) charged and dispersed several French squadrons but there was no bringing Boufflers' main body to action.

Still, even if twice baulked of a battle on favourable terms, Marlborough had at least manœuvred the French away from the Meuse and could besiege Venloo (August 18th/29th). With this operation the French made no effort to interfere and after Cutts, the famous "Salamander," and the British troops had stormed the outlying fort of St. Michael in brilliant style[1] (September 7th/18th) Venloo soon fell (September 14th/25th). Thereupon Ruremonde also was invested and taken, falling on September 26th/October 7th. The campaigning season was already near its close but Marlborough was insatiable. Boufflers had shifted nearer Tongres, midway between Liège and the lines he had prepared along the Gheete to the Mehaigne, but fearing that Marlborough might strike at Bonn or at Cologne, he had weakened his main body by detaching Tallard to the Rhine.[2] In special alarm for Liège he was shifting towards that city when Marlborough,

[1] One officer wrote how the British had behaved themselves "so that no one that was there could with modesty express, nor no one that was not believe." Coke MSS., iii., p. 16.

[2] Millner, p. 39.

divining his intentions, anticipated him by a sudden move South across the Jaar (October 1st/12th) which enabled him to occupy the very position Boufflers wanted. Again Marlborough proposed to attack but again the Dutch baulked him. However, though he fell back safely to his lines, Boufflers could not save Liège. The town opened its gates next day (October 2nd/13th) and though the citadel resisted ten days longer it was stormed at the cost of three hundred casualties by the British, of whose extraordinary valour, especially that of the present Norfolks, the 9th Foot, Marlborough wrote in great satisfaction, praising the "very vigorous behaviour of the Queen's subjects."[1]

With this the campaign ended. By October 29th/ November 9th the Allies had dispersed to winter-quarters, Boufflers having already withdrawn from the field. If "by the great caution of the Dutch in not hazarding a battle . . . opportunities," such as might not readily recur, "of ruineing the French army in Flanders" had been avoidably lost[2] Marlborough had some reasons for satisfaction. The places captured were valuable acquisitions and the successes had greatly encouraged the Allied army. One officer wrote after the fall of Venloo, "by these things you may judge what probability there was of success when we might have engaged with a superiority of numbers on our side, no stone walls, nor any impediments but a morass in M. Dopt's noddle."[3] The waterway of the Meuse from

[1] Disp., i., 48; *cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 49.

[2] Clarke to Ormonde, Hist. MSS. Comm., VIIth Report, p. 763.

[3] M. Dopt was a Dutch Deputy. R. Pope to T. Coke, Coke MSS., iii., 16.

Liège downwards, a valuable line of communications, had been secured; a wedge had been driven between the French positions in the Netherlands and in the Electorate of Cologne, the menace to the weak South-Eastern frontier of the United Provinces had been substantially diminished. The fall of Kaiserwerth in particular deprived the French of an important outpost on the Rhine.[1] Even if less than Marlborough might have achieved but for Dutch timidity and obstruction these results were substantial enough, especially in comparison with those of recent campaigns in Flanders, and the more valuable because elsewhere 1702 had gone indifferently for the Allies. In Southern Germany Louis of Baden-Baden, a veteran of many campaigns, commanded the Army of the Empire, a miscellaneous and most inefficient collection of contingents from the minor German states. However, Catinat, his immediate opponent, was even weaker and in June Prince Louis had crossed the Rhine and laid siege to Landau. Landau fell in September, but this success was largely discounted by the defection of the Elector of Bavaria, hitherto nominally neutral, who suddenly declared for France and by surprising Ulm brought Prince Louis back across the Rhine to secure his imperilled communications with Vienna. Moreover Villars, the ablest commander in the French service, superseded Catinat and crossed the Rhine in pursuit of the Army of the

[1] "O cursed Keyzerswerd, cruel be thy weird, Thou art now demolished and cast down. That strong castel they called invincible, With powder in the aire it was blowne." *The Remembrance*, a poem by John Scot, Souldier in the Scots Brigade, published in vol. xxxviii, of the Scottish Historical Society's publications.

Empire which he routed at Friedlingen (October 3rd/14th). Fortunately for the Allies the campaigning season was too far advanced to let Villars follow up his success by crossing the Black Forest and joining the Elector of Bavaria, but the situation was full of peril for the Allies, and Tallard's capture of Treves and Trarbach gave the French possession of a shorter route from the Netherlands to the Upper Rhine. Further afield things had gone badly in Italy despite Eugene's dextrous handling of the small Austrian force.

Even more disappointing was the miscarriage of the great Anglo-Dutch expedition to Cadiz. William III. had grasped the peculiar vulnerability of the French position in the Mediterranean to the pressure which a strong British fleet could exert: he had also realized that without a secure base of operations "up the Straits," or at any rate within easy reach of the Mediterranean, such pressure could only be spasmodically and ineffectively exercised if with the approach of winter the fleet had to return to England. Marlborough's Mediterranean strategy shows how fully he had appreciated and adopted William's enlightened views. The expedition of 1702 was partly intended as a blow at the commercial centre of the trade with Spanish America but its main object was to secure a base from which a British fleet might control the Mediterranean.[1] Unfortunately the admiral, Rooke,

[1] Marlborough had written to Godolphin in March of the importance of securing Cadiz "this time this squadron is in the Straights" and had also suggested that Corunna should be captured on the way home and occupied should it prove tenable (*cf.* A. Morison's MSS, p. 464), steps which if carried out would have gone far to cripple Spanish trade.

seems to have never appreciated or liked the scheme; Ormonde, the general, showed himself unable alike to control his troops to conduct operations with skill or energy, or to co-operate cordially with his naval colleague and with the Dutch. The expedition thus ended in a complete fiasco, as disappointing to the brains which had planned it as discreditable to the mismanagement which had ruined it.

In comparison with these failures Marlborough's successes stood out in marked relief and had more than justified his appointment to the chief command. His resolution and perseverance, the unusual celerity of his movements, the skilful manœuvres by which he had misled Boufflers, his eye for ground, and his promptitude to divine and anticipate his enemy's movements, proclaimed him no commonplace commander and earned him the confidence of his troops. Even Athlone, who as second in command had opposed and criticized his commander's projects, was won over to warm admiration for "this incomparable chief," to whom he attributed all the successes of the campaign, admitting freely his own errors, a change of attitude which made his death during the winter a real misfortune to the Allied cause.

From an even greater loss, however, the Allies only narrowly escaped. After the close of operations Marlborough was proceeding homeward down the Meuse when his boat was stopped by a strong marauding party of French. His escort had lost its way and the guard was quickly overpowered. Fortunately one of Marlborough's servants had with him a safe-conduct from the French made out for Marlborough's brother Charles.

Producing this passport Marlborough was able to bluff his captors into accepting it and the marauders withdrew after plundering the vessel, letting Marlborough go free. But it had been a critical moment, calling for all the imperturbability and self-assurance of which Marlborough was a master.

Arrived back in England Marlborough was most enthusiastically received, even though the Tory majority in the Parliament diminished the value of their vote of thanks to him by according a similar vote to Rooke and Ormonde, whose capture at Vigo of the treasure-fleet from the West Indies had partly compensated for their failure at Cadiz. A more solid reward was the dukedom which the Queen now conferred upon him with a pension of five thousand pounds a year secured on the Post Office. According to one story[1] the pension was originally granted for the Queen's life but Marlborough, who had at first begged to decline the dukedom on the ground of his insufficient estate, asked for a confirmation of the pension to himself and his heirs by Act of Parliament,[2] a demand which excited some hostile comment, till as a compromise the pension was granted for Marlborough's life.

During the winter Marlborough was mainly occupied in preparations for the next campaign, for which Parliament voted an augmentation of the forces by 10,000 foreigners together with five new battalions of British. But politics also made some demands on his time. He

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 53.

[2] Shortly after the grant (December, 1702) of the dukedom, Marlborough suffered a severe blow in the death (February, 1703) of his only son, the Marquis of Blandford, an undergraduate at Cambridge.

played a leading part in inducing the Lords to pass a bill giving Prince George of Denmark a fixed income of £100,000 a year, a measure vigorously opposed by Sunderland. He found himself at variance from Nottingham and the High Tory party because he favoured the proposal to send help to the Huguenot insurgents in the Cevennes, a measure his friends opposed, arguing that to give assistance to rebels would be a bad precedent. But Tories, for all their traditional hostility to the Dutch, were as energetic in support of the war as Whigs, being anxious to clear themselves of any suspicion of friendliness to France.

The middle of March, 1703, some weeks before the armies could take the field, found Marlborough at The Hague concerting plans with his allies. As usual he favoured a vigorous offensive, his idea being to counteract the French advance on the Upper Rhine, to which their preparations clearly pointed, by making them reinforce their army in the Netherlands. Their successes of the autumn of 1702 on the Upper Rhine and the assistance of the Elector of Bavaria encouraged the French to make their main effort an advance Eastward to join their new ally, with whom their army from Italy was to co-operate by pushing over the Alps into the valley of the Inn. Indeed, even before Marlborough reached The Hague, Villars had besieged and captured Kehl (March) after which he prepared to cross the Black Forest into Bavaria, another force under Tallard covering his movements against interruption from the Army of the Empire, now posted behind the lines of Stolhofen. In the Netherlands Villeroi had nearly sixty thousand men, mostly collected behind the

Mehaigne, with detachments covering Antwerp and Bruges. Villeroi indeed had entertained ideas of a dash at Liège, counting on the proverbial dilatoriness of the Dutch to let him be first in the field.[1] He had reckoned without Marlborough, however. The Duke had failed to induce the Dutch to agree to an invasion of French Flanders and Brabant, a proposal much too bold for men who could not rise beyond the idea, an inheritance from the days of Maurice of Nassau, that to reduce fortresses was the whole art of war, and whose proposals for the coming campaign were restricted to a mere defensive.[2] But though obliged to content himself with the reduction of Bonn, Marlborough by sheer energy and driving power brought the Dutch into the field weeks before Villeroi calculated. Indeed their troops began collecting on the Meuse in the course of March.

On Marlborough's arrival at Maastricht (April 2nd/13th) operations at once began. With forty battalions and sixty squadrons he moved upon Bonn and by April 16th/27th the siege had begun. Operations were pushed on vigorously and indeed there was need for rapidity. The covering army left under Auverquerque between Liège and Maastricht,[3] was decidedly inferior to Villeroi's force. There was every prospect therefore that if the siege was unduly protracted the covering troops might be in serious peril. Villeroi, enraged by Marlborough's unexpected stroke, endeavoured to profit by the chance. Advancing promptly against Auver-

[1] Lediard, i, 219.

[2] *Cf.* Checquers Court MSS, pp. 120–1.

[3] This included the British contingent of eight regiments of horse, sixteen battalions of foot, and forty guns.

querque he was checked at Tongres by the stubborn resistance of the Queen's Regiment and Elst's Dutch battalion and delayed for twenty-eight hours. In the end (April 28th/May 9th) the little garrison had to capitulate but the stand had saved Auverquerque who in his turn proved equal to the occasion, displaying in Parker's phrase "great prudence, experience and valour." Against the strong position the Dutch general had taken up, supported by the guns and fortifications of Maastricht, Villeroi hesitated to launch his troops and after suffering from his enemy's artillery recoiled discomfited (May 4th/15th). Two days later Marlborough rejoined his subordinate. Bonn had fallen on the very day of Villeroi's appearance before Maastricht. Rather than waste valuable time on securing the garrison's unconditional surrender Marlborough had granted them the honours of war and could therefore return promptly to succour Auverquerque. The speedy fall of the fortress had not only cleared the Rhine from the Dutch frontier upward but set the Allied forces free for a further offensive.[1]

The project Marlborough had formed was somewhat ambitious. The French lines from Namur to Antwerp were extremely strong but too extensive for the available defenders and Marlborough hoped to distract them from his main objective, which was no less than the capture of Antwerp, by operating simultaneously in several quarters. The actual attack on Antwerp was

[1] It is worth mention that in recognition of the services of the defenders of Tongres when Marlborough took Huy (August) he kept the garrison of that place in strict confinement until the French agreed to release the Queen's and Elst's.

entrusted to Opdam, who was to advance from Bergen op Zoom, but as a diversion a column under the celebrated engineer Cohorn was to attack Ostend, while the main army under Marlborough kept the principal forces of the French occupied by advancing from Maastricht to the heights between the Jaar and the Meuse near Huy. As a further diversion it was arranged that the fleet should threaten a descent on Dieppe, thereby anticipating the method to be employed by Chatham in the Seven Years' War to distract the forces of France from the battle-fields of Germany. Marlborough played his part successfully. Advancing on May 14th/25th with 60 battalions and 120 squadrons he forced the French to fall back in haste to a strong position near Haneff. It was all they could do to cover Huy, and other quarters were in no position to spare reinforcements. But at this moment Cohorn, by an ill-timed plundering raid into Western Flanders when he should have been besieging Ostend, upset the whole scheme, set the French in that quarter on the alert, and compelled Marlborough to arrange a new combination.

In this scheme Opdam was as before to attack Antwerp covered by flanking columns under Spaar and Cohorn, the main body under the Duke himself was to distract Villeroi's attention by threatening the French lines near Lierre, South-East of Antwerp. As before he carried out his own part successfully. But once again his subordinates, not his adversary, checkmated his scheme. Cohorn went off plundering into West Flanders again and left Opdam's flank uncovered, Spaar moved prematurely, and Opdam reached Eckeren just

North of Antwerp to find himself unsupported (July 18th/29th). Moreover, he contributed not a little to his own overthrow by neglecting his very explicit instructions to take up a secure post and by letting himself be surprised. Opdam fled promptly to Breda, leaving his second-in-command, Slangenberg, to extricate the troops. Slangenberg made a good fight and got more than half his men away[1] but the great scheme was hopelessly ruined. Marlborough indeed had not been too hopeful. "We have a report come from Breda," he wrote to Godolphin (June 21st/July 2nd) "that Opdam is beat. I pray God it be not so, for he is very capable of having it happen to him." The only gleam of satisfaction to be elicited from the failure was that Opdam's career in the field came to an inglorious conclusion, but it was trying work for Marlborough to have to depend on colleagues of this calibre who would neither observe ordinary precautions or obey explicit instructions. "The lucre of having a little contribution from the Pays de Waes" he wrote of Cohorn, "has spoiled the whole design."

Not even this second disappointment exhausted Marlborough's patience or ingenuity. He continued to frame schemes for attacking the French lines between Lierre and Antwerp[2] and at length (July 12th/23rd) succeeded in enticing Villeroi out into a position at St. Job just outside the lines. All that was needed was that Slangenberg should come up from Fort Lillo[3] when Villeroi, thinking better of it, stole back behind his lines[4] and the Dutch flatly refused to consent to an

[1] Disp., i., 130.
[2] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 64.
[3] Just below Antwerp.
[4] Parker, p. 92.

attack. Their obstructiveness left Marlborough with no alternative but to return to the Meuse, for in the district in which he now stood an army could not be subsisted for any long period.

Accordingly on July 23rd/August 3rd Marlborough started his return journey, crossed the Demer two days later at Hasselt, and took post North-West of Huy to cover the siege of that petty fortress. Its capture was the affair of ten days, by August 14th/25th it had fallen, and Marlborough was proposing to attempt the French lines between the Mehaigne and the Meuse, as yet incomplete.[2] The Allies were in superior numbers and there was the better chance of success because the fall of Huy had exposed Namur and to cover that place the French must detach troops. Moreover the ill-success of the Allies elsewhere made a victory in Flanders specially desirable.[3] But nothing moved the Dutch, though Danish and Hanoverian generals supported Marlborough's arguments. The siege of Limburg was all they would allow and with its fall (September 16th/27th) after a fortnight's siege operations ended. One of the British officers wrote that they were "like chymists that miss of the Philosopher's Stone but make discoveries equivalent to the great arcanum they aimed at. Though we did not succeed in our first designs and attempts these petty towns are not of less advantage for the securing of Liège, shortening our communications with the Rhine and facilitating the siege of Namur, whenever we shall think fit to undertake it."[4] Still

[1] Disp., i., 148.
[2] *Cf.* Checquers Court MSS., p. 134.
[3] Disp., i., 165–166.
[4] Hans Hamilton to T. Coke, Coke MSS., iii, 26.

Marlborough was bitterly chagrined at seeing his plans foiled by the indiscipline prevalent in the army[1] and by the continual interference of the Dutch. Moreover, some of the extremer Tories, notably Rochester and Nottingham, already none too friendly to him, were utilizing this want of success as a weapon against him. The motives for their hostility were largely personal; Nottingham in particular was specially jealous of Godolphin, but the line of argument they adopted was that of inveighing against participation in Continental campaigns, a specious argument well calculated to appeal to the uninstructed insularity of many of their party but unsound and based on complete misconceptions of strategic possibilities. To add to Marlborough's difficulties the Whigs were becoming increasingly restive at their continued exclusion from office, but the Queen was obdurate. Marlborough himself was always anxious to adopt a middle position: he was most reluctant to be associated exclusively with either party. He feared that if he broke with the Tories they would denounce the alliance with Holland on the quite legitimate excuse of the obstruction and defective preparations of the Dutch.[2] These political complications, however, were no inconsiderable addition to

[1] Disp., i., 198.

[2] Godolphin wrote to Harley September 15th/26th: "I must own the conduct of Holland this summer gives but too just a handle for clamour against our great expense of carrying on this war in their country" (Portland MSS., iv., 69), and Chesterfield actually attributed the refusal of the Dutch generals to fight to specific commands from the States General, adding, "it has long been a maxim amongst them not to exasperate their enemies by bloody battles in hopes of conquests but rather to secure what they have and expect an advantageous peace" (Coke MS. iii., 26).

his burdens. Chesterfield indeed in September, 1703, declared that he believed the Duke was anxious to pick a quarrel with the States over the obstructions he had suffered in order to make an honourable excuse for quitting the service,[1] and Marlborough does actually seem to have even contemplated resigning the command and expressed himself as desirous of "retiring from these uneasy and troublesome broils";[2] but this may merely have been a passing phase for shortly after his return to England he seems to have begun to frame the great design which in the following year was to change so completely the aspect of the war.

Such a change indeed was very essential to the Grand Alliance. While in the Netherlands Villeroi had substantially attained his object, for the gains of the Allies had made no appreciable change in the strategical situation, elsewhere French arms had prospered. Early in the year Villars had crossed the Black Forest into Bavaria and united with the Elector; considerable success seemed in his grasp when he fell out with that prince, who insisted on attempting the reduction of Tyrol when the French general was urgent for pushing on down the Danube on Vienna. As it was, the Imperialists were badly beaten at Hochstadt on the Danube in September and, though the gallant resistance of the Tyrolese prevented a junction between the Franco-Bavarians and their colleague Vendôme from Italy, the way to Vienna lay open. Further, Tallard who had been left on the Rhine had retaken Landau (November), and this coupled with the capture of Breisach (September), had quite secured the French communications

[1] Coke MSS., iii., 26. [2] To Harley, Bath MSS., i., 56.

with Bavaria. Against these gains the Allies could only set an alliance concluded in May with Portugal which provided the Grand Alliance with a base for operations in the Peninsula and gave England what she badly needed, harbours from which her ships could operate continuously in Mediterranean waters. Lisbon and Lagos took the place that Cadiz would have filled had the great expedition so mismanaged by Rooke and Ormonde in the previous year met with success. The re-opening of active operations in this quarter necessitated the withdrawal from Flanders of a regiment of horse and six battalions of infantry for service in the Peninsula, but Marlborough had too sure a grip of the general strategic situation to oppose their departure. On the contrary he was careful to send good and strong units[1]; and indeed as Captain-General of all the English forces at home as well as in Holland and one of the leading advisers of the Crown, the responsibility for the decision to send troops to Portugal was largely his. Portugal's adherence to the side of the Allies made possible an effective diversion in the Peninsula, no mere "side-show" which would use up troops badly wanted elsewhere without benefiting the general situation. Moreover, even in 1703 one advantage had been secured to which the prospect of continuous naval pressure in the Mediterranean had undoubtedly contributed. The Duke of Savoy, ever inclined to a policy of balance between his powerful neighbours, had for some time past been drifting away from his French alliance. He was greatly encouraged by the prospect of seeing off Toulon an English fleet capable of reviving that silent pres-

[1] Disp., i., 237.

sure in Mediterranean affairs which English fleets had wielded when William III.'s insight and resolution had kept the Grand Fleet out in those waters, in the face of adverse expert opinion, from 1694 to 1696. By October he had taken the plunge, broken with his Bourbon allies and concluded a treaty with the Emperor, a change of front which went far to redress the balance in Italy in favour of the Grand Alliance.

CHAPTER IX

THE MARCH TO THE DANUBE

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN—VIENNA THREATENED—MARLBOROUGH STARTS—THE MARCH UP THE RHINE—THE FRENCH OUTWITTED—THE SCHELLENBERG—THE FIRST VICTORY—TALLARD TO THE RESCUE—THE ALLIES UNITE.

THE winter of 1703–1704 brought Marlborough no rest. He had first to win Godolphin's approval for an extremely daring project for the coming campaign: next to induce the Commons to vote an additional ten thousand troops: his duties as Commander-in-Chief afforded his energy and organizing powers ample scope, while the opposition of the Tory extremists invested the political situation with some seriousness. Moreover, he found it necessary to pay a special visit to Holland in midwinter to see how the Dutch preparations were progressing and to impart to Heinsius some inkling of his plan of campaign.[1] He found the States General despondent,[2] complaining of the heavy burdens already imposed on the United Provinces. But his visit worked wonders: he so far encouraged his allies that they promised increased supplies of men and money and to arrange for the formation of ample magazines. Moreover, by suggesting the Moselle as the

[1] Burnet says Heinsius was fully aware of the scheme but this seems doubtful.

[2] Disp., i., 226.

theatre of the Allies' chief efforts of the year he paved the way to carrying out the great design he had formed.

The plan was not one to be abruptly broached to strategists as unenterprising or politicians as timid as the Dutch: its boldness was calculated to surprise and alarm them, the more so because it involved the transfer to the interior of Germany of the main forces of the Maritime Powers. The last two campaigns had convinced Marlborough that no rapid transformation of the military situation could be effected in the Netherlands. There he might at best hope to pierce the formidable lines which the French had constructed, to reduce some of the many fortresses which studded that country, it was even possible that, if successful in bringing on a pitched battle and defeating the field army of his enemies, he might clear a substantial portion of territory, but such successes would avail little if meanwhile the French and Bavarians should force their way to Vienna, and perhaps impose on the Emperor a separate peace. Marlborough's insight showed him clearly where the decisive theatre lay, and his plan was to transfer himself to the Danube and to take to the assistance of the Emperor the British contingent and the Danish and German auxiliaries in the pay of the Maritime Powers. Apart from the difficulties of arranging for the movement of so large a force over such a distance, no easy matter under any circumstances, the plan involved a flank march across the front of a numerous and well-posted enemy, who would if warned in time have excellent chances of dealing a blow at the columns engaged in this always hazardous manœuvre. If the front from the North Sea to

Switzerland be regarded as a whole the French were approximately in echelon from their left with their right wing, their force in Bavaria, so well forward as practically to be in rear of the Allies' centre, while their right centre, the army in Alsace, and left centre, the troops on the Moselle, were within striking distance of the route which the Allied right must follow in its move from the Netherlands to the succour of its weakened and already defeated left on the Danube. Nor were the forces available for covering this movement, Louis of Baden's at Stolhofen, either numerous, efficient, or well commanded. All therefore depended on concealing from the enemy the object of the move and thereby gaining such a good start that the French on the Moselle and in Alsace could not be in time to intercept the march. And there was an additional reason for secrecy. So daring and risky a venture was altogether beyond the Dutch. To unfold the whole scheme to them would have been to invite its rejection. Well fortified though their Southern frontier was they felt it none too strong. Marlborough might be satisfied that the campaigns of 1702–1703 had removed the dangers that at the outset of war had threatened the United Provinces from the South: his allies were still apprehensive in this quarter. Marlborough might contemplate the move to the Danube without any qualms for his base, in which light Holland must be regarded; the Dutch would not share his equanimity. The proposal to transfer the British and their auxiliaries to the Moselle, the utmost the Duke ventured to broach, threw the Dutch into an agony of apprehension and conjured up visions of a sweeping French offensive

against Breda, Maastricht, Nimuegen, and every other fortress they possessed, and only after much consultation and a threat from Marlborough that he would proceed to the Moselle with all troops in English pay, regardless of the Dutch, did the States General consent at last to a campaign on that river.

Luckily for the prospects of Marlborough's great design, preparations for operations on the Moselle both concealed the real plan and paved the way to carrying it out. Marlborough had written in February to the King of Prussia[1] that the Moselle was the place where the most effective work for the Allied cause could be done, and he made his arrangements without arousing the suspicions of the French or of his allies that anything further was afoot. Thus when the Prussian and Hanoverian contingents were directed to Coblence apparently for operations on the Moselle they were in reality equally well posted for taking their places among the columns moving South-East up the Rhine. Contracts for shoes and other supplies could be placed at Mayence or Frankfurt or other cities of the Middle Rhine without exciting suspicion that anything more was intended than operations on the Moselle. If to mislead, mystify, and surprise one's enemy be "the secret of successful war" assuredly in the spring of 1704 Marlborough succeeded to perfection in this most difficult task. Not till the march to the Danube was already almost assured of success did the true destination of Marlborough's marching columns dawn upon the French.

But the Danube project by no means exhausted

[1] Disp., i., 240.

Marlborough's schemes. Anxious to profit by the new members, Portugal and Savoy, whom the Grand Alliance had secured in Southern Europe, and to utilize them in what he saw clearly would be the most effective diversion possible for the Imperial chances in Germany, he proposed to dispatch to the Mediterranean a strong Anglo-Dutch fleet under Rooke. Rooke was first to carry to Portugal the Emperor's second son, the Archduke Charles, to whom the Hapsburg claims in Spain had recently been resigned and after landing at Lisbon the Archduke and the troops with which England and Holland were providing him, the fleet was to proceed to the Riviera. Here it was expected that touch would be obtained with the Duke of Savoy who was to find the land forces necessary for the main enterprise, a joint attack on Toulon by sea and land. This far-reaching scheme shows Marlborough's width of view and insight into strategic possibilities. In the midst of planning the most ambitious venture attempted by any commander of his times he could see the advantages to be gained in other fields, could balance against each other the claims of the Danube and of the Mediterranean, could spare for a really promising venture in the Peninsula troops whom he could well have utilized on the march up the Rhine, in a word could prepare for two great ventures at once, could arrange for a masterly diversion which might contribute mightily to the success of the main stroke.

But though Savoy's change of sides had removed one of the dangers which threatened Vienna, the position on the Danube was perilous enough. It was fortunate for the Allies that Villars' quarrels with the Elector had

led to his recall, but though his successor, Marsin, was greatly his inferior in capacity, his troops brought up the Elector's forces of nearly fifty thousand, whereas the Imperialists could only hope to collect about thirty thousand to cover Vienna. Moreover, Tallard was waiting on the Rhine with reinforcements, ready to push forward over the Black Forest directly the season allowed, and there was little chance of this move being prevented by Louis of Baden and the weak force holding the famous Stolhofen lines. In April Tallard started, crossed the hills almost unopposed, and after conveying the reinforcements to the Elector's camp at Dillingen (May 8th/19th) returned to Kehl to cover Marsin's communications from Louis of Baden. That commander, always incurably slow, had altogether failed to interfere with these reinforcements, and to crown this, Thungen and Styrum, the Austrian commanders on the Danube, missed a good chance of defeating the Elector and then relapsed into inactivity. Failing help from Marlborough the prospects of a successful resistance were poor indeed. Louis of Baden came up with seven thousand men from Stolhofen and took over command, but did nothing to retrieve a desperate situation, and even Eugene who joined him early in June could effect no substantial improvement.

But meanwhile Marlborough was approaching. Landing in Holland on April 10th/21st he proceeded, after a conference with the States General at which the Moselle operations were finally approved, to Maastricht, arriving there on April 29th/May 10th. The British contingent, which had collected at Maastricht in March to assist in the construction of fortified lines

which greatly increased the security of that fortress,[1] had already started for the appointed rendezvous at Bedburg, twenty miles North-West of Cologne. This contingent, 19 squadrons and 14 battalions with a train of 38 pieces, was over 14,000 strong.[2]

Marlborough, his arrangements at last completed, reached Bedburg on May 5th/16th to find himself at the head of 90 squadrons and 51 battalions,[3] and four days later the move began. Then only did Marlborough write to Stepney, the English representative at Vienna,

[1] *Cf* Parker, p. 92.

[2] The units which shared in Marlborough's greatest campaign were those subsequently known as the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, and 7th Dragoon Guards, 2d Dragoons (Scots Greys), 5th Lancers, Grenadier Guards, 1st Foot (Royal Scots, two battalions), 3rd (Buffs), 8th (King's), 10th (Lincolnshires), 15th (East Yorkshires), 16th (Bedfordshires), 18th (Royal Irish), 21st (Royal Scots Fusiliers), 23rd (R. W. F.), 24th (South Wales Borderers), 26th (Cameronians), and 37th (Hampshires). Four more squadrons and six battalions of British together with the famous Scots Brigade were among the seventy thousand men left with Auverquerque to defend the United Provinces. As already pointed out there was no systematic corps or divisional organization, but the British infantry formed three brigades. Further the proportion of generals in the British contingent was extraordinarily high, there being no less than sixteen besides Marlborough himself. Charles Churchill was "General of the Foot," there were four Lieutenant-Generals, Cutts, Ingoldsby, Lumley, and Orkney, three Major-Generals, and eight Brigadiers, among these last being Meredith, the Adjutant-General, and Cadogan, the Quartermaster General. A Waggon Master General, a Provost Master General, a Judge Advocate General, seven Brigade Majors, twenty-one Aides-de-Camp, and the Duke's own Chaplain, Physician and Surgeon were included in the staff. *Cf.* Blenheim Roll, pp. 1–7.

[3] For calculating strengths a squadron may be taken as 150 at the beginning of a campaign, a battalion at 700, but as the campaign progressed these effectives would be much reduced. Still the 14 British battalions averaged nearly 600 at Blenheim even after losing 1500 at the Schellenberg. (Blenheim Roll.)

bidding him impart to the Emperor the cheering news, still carefully concealed from the Dutch, that it was for the Danube that his troops were bound.[1] Barely had he started when an agitated message reached him from Auverquerque. Villeroi was on the move, had crossed the Meuse, and was menacing Huy. Marlborough was unperturbed: he realized that Villeroi's move was merely intended to parry his own move to the Moselle, and he reassured his anxious subordinate by bidding him draw troops from the garrisons and take the offensive, now that Villeroi was quitting his neighbourhood.[2] The march was continued undisturbed. Marlborough and the cavalry pushed on ahead, the infantry following by shorter stages, while the waterway of the Rhine, freed by the successes of the previous campaigns, was utilized for the transport of the artillery and heavier baggage. On May 12th/23rd Marlborough began to divulge his true intentions to the States General, writing to them that the shortcomings of the preparations for a campaign on the Moselle were such as to justify him in departing from his instructions. That day the British infantry crossed the Sinzig where Millner notes they had for the first time "plenty of wine and Spaw water." On the 14th/25th Marlborough and the cavalry reached Coblence and crossed to the right bank of the Rhine. Two days later the infantry followed suit, much to the bewilderment of Parker who writes,[3] "when we expected to march up the Moselle to our surprise we passed that river over a stone-bridge and the Rhine over two bridges of boats." Here the marching columns were

[1] *Cf.* Disp., i., 258. [2] Disp., i., 271. [3] p. 94.

augmented by reinforcements of Hanoverians and Prussians, while as they continued their route still Southward and Eastward a further addition of Hessian infantry joined them. Meanwhile Marlborough and the cavalry arrived at Cassel opposite Mayence on May 18th/29th.

By this time it was becoming obvious that the Moselle was not the real destination. But the true design was still a mystery and Marlborough, careful to maintain the screen which hid his intentions, asked permission from the Landgrave of Hesse to have the artillery sent up to Mannheim and arranged for a bridge of boats at Philipsburg. These measures were naturally interpreted by the French as pointing to a stroke against Alsace. Tallard promptly recrossed the Rhine from Kehl (May 22nd/June 2nd) to take post on the Lauter to cover Landau. Villeroi, who had halted on the Moselle, prepared to assist his colleague and sent to Flanders for reinforcements, though the States General in great alarm were appealing to Marlborough to send back their auxiliary troops to protect them from a wholly imaginary danger. But Marlborough pushed forward. May 20th/31st saw him across the Main, three days more and he was bridging the Neckar near Ladenburg, while his infantry after toiling "up a very steep hill and a tedious road" (Millner) had reached Cassel on May 22nd/June 2nd. "This is like to be a campaign of great fatigue and trouble," wrote Captain Blackader of the Cameronians, and on May 24th/June 4th the Duke wrote to Godolphin[1] that his infantry and guns had been delayed by bad roads and ill weather

[1] Disp., i., 290.

and were six days' march behind the cavalry, but should be crossing the Main that day, that he himself was halting to rest his horses and let the slower marching infantry catch up.[1] He had just reason for satisfaction: the most critical stage of the march was safely over: the feints on the Moselle and at Alsace had played their part, the French had been deluded and could not now prevent the concentration of his army in the heart of Southern Germany.

The next stage brought Marlborough and the cavalry to Gross Heppach in Würtemberg by May 30th/June 10th, involving a second passage of the Neckar near Heilbronn. Here he had before him the hills which separate the Neckar from the Upper Danube and it was again necessary to halt and await the infantry. These, moving forward across the Main (May 24th/June 4th) and Neckar (May 28th/June 8th) had enjoyed four days of well-earned rest near Heidelberg, where Marlborough's forethought had provided an ample supply of shoes to make good deficiencies; thence on June 1st/12th they moved to Setten, "a little town," writes Millner, "most inhabited by Jews where we had first scarcity of beer but plenty of wine: there we were obliged to halt two days by the badness of the weather which stopt our train." The movement of what was for those days an unusual proportion of field-pieces was indeed one of Marlborough's greatest difficulties and Archdeacon Hare's *Journal* is emphatic in recording the exertions and devotion of the officers responsible for moving the ponderous pieces over the execrable apologies for roads and through hilly country. It shows how

[1] Disp., i., 295.

much Marlborough valued the artillery arm that, when rapidity of movement was essential, he should have hampered his progress with so large a train of guns.

It was at Mondelheim, the day before reaching Gross Heppach, that Marlborough met for the first time the brilliant colleague with whom his name will always be associated. Prince Eugene, half French, half Italian by birth, more than twelve years Marlborough's junior, was a soldier of reputation and wide experience. As a youth he had taken part in the famous relief of Vienna in 1683: the expulsion of the Turks from Hungary had been in large measure his work, for his brilliant victory at Zenta (September, 1697) had left the Turks no option but to accept the peace of Carlowitz (January, 1699), the greatest triumph in Hapsburg annals. Against European enemies Eugene had served with distinction in Italy in the war of 1689–1697, and his skilful campaign against Catinat and Villeroi in the Po valley in 1701 had much enhanced his fame. An accomplished tactician, a gallant leader, he was a colleague doubly welcome by contrast with the pedantic Dutchmen by whom for the last two years Marlborough had been obstructed, and the harmony with which they were to work is not less creditable to both than uncommon in the annals of war. Once or twice Eugene was to draw back from some daring suggestion of Marlborough's (*cf.* p. 348) but such divergencies of opinion were exceptional.

Eugene's arrival was followed by that of a soldier of a very different school. Like Eugene, Prince Louis of Baden had graduated in warfare against the Turks. In his day he had done good service, but he was slow,

unenterprising, and incapable of rising beyond the commonplace in strategy and tactics, and his limitations may be estimated by the inordinate value he attached to the construction of elaborate fortified lines, which he looked upon as the chief art of the general. He abhorred manœuvre and the attack, and clung to the defensive and the spade. Jealous of his position and most punctilious it was difficult to arrive at any satisfactory arrangement with him, but finally it was agreed that Eugene should take over the Stolhofen force and the task of preventing the French from reinforcing their troops in Bavaria while Prince Louis and Marlborough should co-operate on the Danube, taking the chief command on alternate days, a compromise which hardly augured well for the prospects of the operations.[1]

This arrangement reached, Marlborough advanced again with his cavalry (June 3rd/14th) and crossing the narrow and difficult Geislingen Pass joined the Prince of Baden's army at Ursprung ten miles North of Ulm (June 11th/22nd.) However, before any serious operations could be undertaken Marlborough's infantry and guns had to come up. This column had made its way steadily forward from Setten, somewhat delayed by the artillery who found the way "very heavy, deep, and tedious."[2] Their road lay past Stuttgart (June 6th/17th) to "Egsling, a strong pass in Swabia" (June 13th/24th), and so with more difficulty on account of the guns they struggled over the hills into the Danube valley and on June 16th/27th reached Gingen, fifteen miles North-East of Ulm whither Marlborough had

[1] Disp., i., 309. [2] Millner, p. 89.

moved the day before. Contingents of Hanoverian and Hessians had already arrived and the total force amounted to 200 squadrons, 96 battalions, and 48 guns.[1]

Thus had been safely accomplished a march which must always be accounted, both in conception and in execution, a masterly example of the general's art. "In war everything is very simple but the simple is very difficult." Marlborough's success in transferring the main striking force of the Grand Alliance from Brabant to Bavaria is apt to conceal from the unmilitary reader the practical difficulties of his achievement. The failure of the French to interfere with a move which so completely altered the whole strategical situation is in itself no small testimony to Marlborough's skill in outwitting them and concealing his intentions. But what is not so apparent, though fully as important, is the triumph of organization which brought the British and their auxiliaries to the Danube in excellent physical and moral condition despite the length of their march. Tallard when he crossed the Black Forest in April with the reinforcements for Marsin, had hustled his militia recruits[2] along at a pace that incapacitated half of them before ever they reached their destination. Marlborough's cavalry reached Mondelheim in such splendid condition that Eugene was amazed. And Marlborough's correspondence with his brother Charles reveals the solicitude

[1] Parker (p. 96) puts the total at 85,000, Kane (p. 44) at 80,000, but these totals seem rather lower than might be expected from the figures given.

[2] De la Colonie, p. 167.

with which he watched over every detail. One finds him directing that three rests should be given to the troops between Heidelberg and Geislingen.[1] Ample supplies of money were forthcoming to allow the men to pay for all that they required, whereby marauding was checked, discipline maintained, and friction with the country-folk avoided. Horses were provided to carry the soldiers' tents[2] and in Parker's words:

> As we marched through the countries of our allies commissaries were appointed to furnish us with all manner of necessaries for man and horse: these were brought to the ground before we arrived and the soldiers had nothing to do but to pitch their tents, boil their kettles, and lie down to rest. Surely never was such a march carried on with more order and regularity and with less fatigue.

Millner's testimony is not less emphatic; the march, he says, was always begun by break of day or sun-rising, thus by the time it was really hot troops had reached their next camp "so that the remaining part of the day's rest was as good as a day's halt."[3] Richard Pope, an officer in the present 7th D. G., writing from Ladenburg expressed his satisfaction with the excellent condition of the horses despite the length and expeditiousness of the march and speaks of the ample supplies of forage which had been available.[4] With such care and forethought the troops were well able to accomplish an average day's march of from twelve to fourteen miles, to cover the 250 miles from the Meuse to the Danube in less than six weeks and to arrive in fighting trim, eager

[1] Disp., i., 303.
[2] Checquers Court MSS., p. 104.
[3] P. 83 *cf.* Disp., i., 301.
[4] Coke MSS., iii., 36.

and fit for action. Nor was this all. The success of the move greatly encouraged the Allies. "The country gentlemen," as Thomas Coke wrote to Marlborough,[1] had "long groaned under the weight of four shillings in the pound without hearing of a town taken or any enterprise endeavoured," they were "more chearful in this warr" when expeditions were "carried on so secretly that they are in a manner successfully over even before the French, so famous formerly for good intelligence, can give a guess where the stroke is likely to fall."

When the Allied forces united at Gingen they were faced by some sixty thousand Franco-Bavarians, three-fifths of them French, who surprised and taken aback by Marlborough's arrival had hastily abandoned their scheme to besiege Nüremberg and had fallen back from Ulm to an entrenched camp near Dillingen, lower down the Danube.[2] About as many French troops were on the Upper Rhine for Villeroi had by this time arrived at Strassburg, while Eugene's force in the Stolhofen lines mustered about half that number.[3] Marlborough's march had delivered Vienna from immediate peril, and had thrown the Elector and Marsin on to the defensive, but he was anxious to bring them to action before reinforcements could reach them from the Upper Rhine and partly with this object, partly in the hope of securing a passage over the Danube, he prevailed on his colleague to march on Donauwörth, the nearest bridge over the river, which lay a few miles below the Elector's camp.

In the course of June 20th/July 1st the Allies marched

[1] Coke MSS., iii., 38.

[2] *Cf.* De la Colonie, pp. 171–175.

[3] Disp., i., 306.

North-East to Amerdingen, passing across the front of the Elector's position. This challenge to battle was not accepted but the Bavarian, divining their intention and alarmed for Donauwörth, hurried off a picked detachment under Count d'Arco to reinforce the garrison. The key to the defence of Donauwörth was the Schellenberg, a hill just outside the walls and North-East of the town. An entrenchment had already been thrown up round its flat summit, starting at the outworks of Donauwörth and running round the hill to the Danube, a distance of nearly two miles. It was strongest on the North where the hill was most accessible, while on the North-West there was an old fort in which guns were posted. The position was naturally strong but as Donauwörth was covered to the South and West by the unfordable Wernitz, and to the West by marshy ground the possession of the hill was essential if the town was to be taken without undue loss of time.

The next day (June 21st/July 2nd) it was Marlborough's turn to command, and he was resolved to make the best use of his twenty-four hours. There was need to be astir early for there was much to be done and all too little time. Amerdingen was fully fourteen miles from the Schellenberg, and as of late wet weather had made the roads very bad even to reach the foot of the Schellenberg in the day would be no mean achievement. But Marlborough's keen insight and spirit of enterprise went beyond this. He was set upon the capture of this important position and he had seen enough of his colleague to know that if the Schellenberg were to be stormed it must be stormed that same day.

While Louis of Baden was carefully preparing the elaborate attack which was all that his slow-moving and formal mind could contemplate the Franco-Bavarians would have time to reinforce d'Arco from their main body and to convert the as yet incomplete works on the Schellenberg into field fortifications as formidable as those of the Alte Veste outside Nüremberg where Wallenstein had gained his one success over the Lion of the North. Accordingly before daybreak a picked advance-guard left the Allies' camp. In this were thirty squadrons, and six thousand selected foot drawn, as was the fashion of the day, in detachments of equal strength from all the forty-five battalions of Marlborough's own command. Two hours later the main body started. By eight o'clock the head of the advance guard had reached the Wernitz and had pushed in the enemy's picquets, and shortly afterwards the Duke himself arrived to reconnoitre the position.

What he saw confirmed his determination to attack though the Margrave, aghast at his colleague's temerity, endeavoured to dissuade him. D'Arco's men were plying spade and pick on the still unfinished defences,[1] while beyond the Danube tents could be seen pitched in a fashion which clearly indicated the expected arrival of reinforcements.[2] But the bridges over the Wernitz had been destroyed and several hours elapsed before the pioneers whom Marlborough's forethought had

[1] Hare's *Journal*, *cf.* De la Colonie, p. 179.

[2] The custom of the day was to have cavalry on the wings, infantry in the centre of a camp: here the tents were pitched on the wings, leaving a space in the centre, obviously intended for the infantry whom it was reasonable to suppose were expected.

placed in the van could make the passage practicable. This, however, gave time for the toiling troops behind to come up along the deep and miry roads and by 3 P.M. the bridges were ready and the river was crossed. By 4 P.M. the Allies were at the foot of the Schellenberg, having forced the enemy to evacuate the little hamlet of Berg to which they set fire as they went. The smoke, however, was turned to advantage by Marlborough as under cover of it he brought up the English guns under Colonel Blood into a good position to assist the attack,[1] to the success of which this accurate fire contributed not a little.[2] It was after 5 P.M. when, all being ready, the advance began.[3] The picked infantry led with the British contingent on the left, their flank covered by a wood. After them followed two lines of cavalry with the leading units of the main body, sixteen battalions, in support.

What followed amply justified Marlborough's decision to attack that evening. The Franco-Bavarian infantry held their fire till the leading assailants were within eighty paces, though guns from the entrenchments and from Donauworth played on the advancing troops in front and flank. The assailants pushed on, to be flung into confusion when the long withheld fire was at last delivered, but rallied and pressed forward till they reached the ditch in front of the entrenchment. To assist in crossing this obstacle every man had been provided with a fascine, but many of them, having mistaken for the ditch a hollow way worn by the rain and some distance in front, had already used their fascines.[4]

[1] *Cf.* Millner.
[2] *Cf.* De la Colonie, p. 180.
[3] Millner, p. 95.
[4] Hare's *Journal.*

Thus there was a check which the defenders utilized to deliver a counter-attack which after a bitter and prolonged struggle[1] drove the assailants back. But support was at hand. Among the leading battalions of the main body were five British, the Guards, the two of the Royal Scots, the 23rd and the 37th. On their stubborn resistance the counter-attack was shattered and advancing they thrust the defenders back. As the assailants gained ground the garrison had to draw on their flanks for reserves to hold their own. To reinforce the attack Lumley, who was following with the cavalry as close up as the ground would allow,[2] now bade the Scots Greys dismount and push forward on foot; still the defenders held their ground. However, by this time more and more Allied troops were up, and some Imperial foot, coming up on the right at a point where the entrenchment was most incomplete, met hardly any opposition. The French regiment posted on this flank, Nectancourt, had been prevented by dead ground from seeing the move. They were overwhelmed and scattered and the assailants, pushing on, came in upon the flank of the main body of the defenders. These, fully absorbed in their own struggle, suddenly perceived lines of infantry in greyish white bearing down upon them. So surprised were they that for a moment the new-comers were taken for friends[3]: they were soon undeceived. A charge by some Franco-Bavarian squadrons failed to stop the advance. Imperialist horse following closely behind put the hostile cavalry to flight, while the infantry of the main attack,

[1] *Cf.* De la Colonie, p. 184.

[2] Parker, p. 97.

[3] *Cf.* De la Colonie, pp. 186–191.

encouraged by the arrival of assistance made one more effort and this time successfully. The defence, once broken, collapsed completely and with the Allied cavalry at their heels the Bavarians streamed down the hill towards the bridge of boats, seeking to put the Danube between them and their pursuers. A few escaped into Donauwörth but the majority were either slaughtered as they fled or perished miserably in the river, for the bridge, unable to bear the weight of the crowd of fugitives, collapsed beneath them. Of d'Arco's force, 10,000 are believed to have perished, and though the Allies' losses were heavy enough, over 5000 in all, the price was not too high for the gains. Among the Allied forces no contingent had suffered more heavily than the English. Out of about 6000 engaged (*i. e.*, five battalions, the picked detachments from the other nine and apparently most of the cavalry) they had over 1500 casualties.[1] But Marlborough wrote delightedly[2]: "The English in particular have gained a great deal of honour in this action . . . the warmest that has been known for many years," and one of their opponents has

[1] Mr. Charles Dalton's invaluable "Blenheim Roll" elucidates the parts played by the British units engaged in this battle. In the five regiments of Horse (*cf.* p. 192) there were 80 casualties, the Scots Greys lost 30 all told, the 5th Dragoons 25. In the infantry (who lost nearly a third of those employed) the chief sufferers were the Guards with 12 officers and 217 men, the two battalions of Orkney's R. Scots, with 13 officers and 145 men and 17 officers and 273 men respectively, and the 23rd (R. W. F.) who lost 16 officers and 228 men. The 37th (Hampshires) came off most lightly of the five complete battalions, having only 90 casualties, but nearly all the other nine lost from a third to half their picked detachments, the 24th (S. W. B.) and 26th (Cameronians) having 80 casualties apiece. The total came to 29 officers and 406 men killed, 86 officers and 1031 men wounded.

[2] Disp., I., 231.

testified to the astonishing intrepidity with which the English infantry had attacked.[1] The credit was not theirs alone, but the Schellenberg may be reckoned as the first victory of the British Army on the Continent. At Steenkirk and Landen British troops had acquitted themselves splendidly, but both those days had gone against their side: at Namur they had proved that they could storm a breach with any troops in Europe: and more recently at Venloo, at Liège, and at Tongres they had shown that the valour of the 18th Royal Irish at Namur was no flash in the pan. But at the Schellenberg they had borne the brunt of a bloody and successful action against good troops, well posted and in the earlier stages of the fight about equal in numbers to their assailants. It is a curious decision which has denied to the regiments engaged in this stubborn and successful fight the battle honour it so well deserves.

The victory was certainly one of importance. The Elector of Bavaria, who had been pressing to d'Arco's succour, "only arrived in time to behold his fate."[2] Dismayed by the destruction of so many of his troops he withdrew behind the Lech in some precipitation, fearing that the Allies might cut off his retreat into his own country. Donauworth was evacuated in haste and the garrison stayed not upon the order of its going but left behind copious supplies of every kind, the more welcome to the Allies since they were finding provisions scarce and hard to obtain. After two days' delay to repair the bridges the Allies passed over the Danube on June 24th/July 5th, pushed on South-East to the Lech and crossed that river unopposed at Gunderkingen three

[1] De la Colonie, p. 184. [2] Kane, p. 45.

days later. Thereupon the Elector, confronted with the choice between abandoning his Electorate to be overrun and ravaged by the Allies and allowing himself to be cut off from the French, decided on the strategically sounder course, and retired Westwards to Augsburg and entrenched there "in hopes of succour from the Rhine."[1] An urgent appeal for reinforcements was already speeding to Villeroi who promptly detached Tallard with 20,000 men—"60 squadrons and 40 battalions of the best troops he had" Kane calls them. Tallard pushed across the Black Forest to the head waters of the Danube, arriving at Villingen on July 5th/16th only to spend five days in an ineffectual siege of that place. He then moved on down the right bank of the Danube, and on July 25th/August 5th joined the Elector at Biberach. This junction, which made the Franco-Bavarians stronger by several thousands than the force under Marlborough and Prince Louis, was an undoubted set-back to the Allies, and their failure to prevent it suggests that their strategy in the period following the passage of the Danube had been at fault. They had been detained for a week in reducing the petty fortress of Rain, which fell on July 5th/16th, and had then advanced to Friedberg on the Lech which was reached on July 12th/23rd. Here their main body remained nearly three weeks, while detachments were sent in all directions with the double object of collecting supplies and of laying waste the country by destroying such of its resources as could not be carried off. This much criticized devastation of Bavaria, for which Louis XIV.'s devastation of the Palatinate in 1674 sup-

[1] Disp., i., 348.

plied a precedent, was not, however, undertaken without sound cause. Marlborough wrote on July 5th/16th "we are now going to burn and destroy the Elector's country in order to get him to hearken to terms," and it had the effect of inducing the Elector to open negotiations. It is possibly some symptom of the dislike his letters display for an unpleasant necessity of war that the Duke did not employ any British troops on this task.[1]

Moreover, the sight of the burning farms of the Lech valley might have stung the Elector into offering Marlborough battle in the open, the only chance of inflicting a defeat upon him before Tallard could arrive. An assault upon the entrenched camp at Augsburg would merely have played into the enemy's hands, and though an advance Westward across the Lech would have placed Marlborough between Augsburg and the advancing reinforcements such a move would have seriously imperilled his communications with Franconia and with Eugene. Had not the Duke been fettered with a colleague like Prince Louis he might have accepted the risk, but so venturesome an advance would never have been even contemplated by that epitome of unenterprising strategy. Partly in hopes of bringing the Elector out from the safety of his entrenchments Marlborough tried to collect enough artillery for a siege of Münich,[2] but, largely owing to Prince Louis himself, the required train was not to be had. At one moment the Elector went so far in negotiating that an interview was fixed for July 25th/August 5th, but, as Parker writes, "it was all grimace in the Elector," and once he

[1] Parker, p. 99.

[2] Disp., i., 380.

heard of Tallard's approach he promptly broke off negotiations. To condemn Marlborough for his inability to prevent the junction is to misread both the general and local conditions and to fail to distinguish between the desirable and the possible in strategy. Nor can Marlborough's great colleague fairly be blamed. Eugene had both Villeroi and Tallard to watch and could not concentrate against Tallard without giving Villeroi a free hand. He showed so bold a front that the French Court, in serious alarm for Alsace, ordered Villeroi not to become involved in the Black Forest or to send further reinforcements to Bavaria. But Eugene had other ideas. Directly he heard of Tallard's move he started Eastward also. He had to leave two thirds of his infantry and a third of his cavalry to watch Villeroi, but with seventy squadrons and twenty battalions he quitted Rothweil on July 12th/23rd and after strenuous marches reached Hochstadt on the Danube a fortnight later. Here, though not actually united, Eugene and Marlborough were within practicable supporting distance and on July 26th/August 6th they met at Schrobenhaüsen, whither Marlborough had moved on hearing of Tallard's junction with the Elector.

An actual junction of the Allied armies indeed would have been premature without more definite idea of their opponents' intentions. The Franco-Bavarians possessed a passage over the Danube at Dillingen and if Eugene should cross the river and join Marlborough on the right bank he would expose Franconia, the chief source of the Allies' supplies. Similarly if Marlborough crossed to the left bank it would give the enemy the

power of crossing the Lech into Bavaria and would do nothing to provoke a battle. By remaining separated and tempting the Franco-Bavarians to try to snatch a success by catching one force unsupported, the Allies were more likely to bring on the battle they desired. But Marlborough and Eugene had no intention of merely waiting on their opponents' movements. Ingolstadt thirty miles below Donauwörth was a fortress of strength and strategic importance; to secure it would give them control of the Danube down to Passau, and though to weaken the army in face of a strong and concentrated enemy involved considerable risks the siege was a challenge the Elector might be unwilling to ignore. Moreover, the scheme acquired additional attractions when Prince Louis was induced to undertake it. With twenty thousand men, all Germans in the Emperor's service,[1] he marched for Ingolstadt on July 29th/August 9th, to the no small relief of his colleagues, Marlborough's main body moving simultaneously to Enheim.

Hardly had Prince Louis moved off when news came in that the Franco-Bavarians were marching in force against the weaker portion of the Allied army, Eugene's force at Hochstadt. This move was what Marlborough had most expected, for he reasoned that the Elector would prefer to operate North of the Danube so as to get the Allies out of Bavaria.[2] There was therefore no delay about putting his troops in motion. Twenty-eight squadrons started at once to Eugene's help; Charles Churchill followed with the guns and

[1] *Cf.* Orkney's letter, E. H. R., vol. xix., p. 307.
[2] *Cf.* Disp., i., 387.

twenty battalions, making for the bridge recently established at Merxheim just below the junction of the Lech and Danube. Next day (July 30th/August 10th) the main body moved forward to the neighbourhood of Rain while Eugene retired to the Kessel, within four miles of Donauwörth. But the Lech, the Danube, and the Wernitz still intervened between Marlborough's main body and his colleague and strenuous exertions on the part of the marching troops as well as skilful staff work in arranging the movement were required if the junction were to be effected in time. But troops and staff were alike equal to the occasion. Marlborough's vanguard was on the move at 1 A.M. of July 31st/August 11th, two hours later the main body set out in two columns, one by Rain and Donauwörth, the other and smaller one by Merxheim. By midday Charles Churchill and the vanguard were with Eugene at Donauworth, whereupon the Prince, who had drawn back to the Schellenberg, advanced again to the Kessel and before midnight Marlborough's main body was up and the Allied army had taken post behind the Kessel with Row's brigade of British infantry pushed forward beyond that river to Munster. Three miles away were the French who in the course of the day had advanced to the Nebel. Their intelligence and reconnoitring had been much at fault,[1] for they had no idea of Marlborough's move and had dismissed as improbable the news that Louis of Baden was on his way to besiege Ingolstadt. To provoke battle with the whole Allied army does not seem to have entered into their plans, their design being to take up a strong posi-

[1] *Cf.* Bagot, MSS., p. 338.

tion in which they might adopt an attitude of observation and wait till their adversaries made some false move or were compelled to shift by lack of provisions or forage. Judged by the standards of Napoleon or Moltke such waiting on events may seem beyond justification, but it was thoroughly in keeping with the then accepted methods of warfare and had Tallard been given the time to fortify his position the plan might have worked well enough. Even Marlborough might have hesitated to hurl his troops at well-planned and sited lines, defended by a force equal if not even superior in numbers to his own. But Marlborough's adversaries had not yet learnt the full measure of his daring, the Schellenberg had not sufficed to show them that the planner of the march to the Danube was no less audacious in tactics than in strategy.

CHAPTER X

BLENHEIM

THE BATTLEFIELD—THE ALLIES ADVANCE—THE FIRST ATTACKS—THE ALLIES CHECKED—THE SITUATION REMEDIED—MARLBOROUGH'S DECISIVE STROKE—THE FRENCH ROUTED—CASUALTIES AND PRISONERS—THE PURSUIT—LANDAU INVESTED—THE MOVE ON TREVES—RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN.

THE Northern bank of the Danube between Dillingen and Donauwörth where the hostile armies now confronted each other is fringed by low wooded hills. In places the woods come within a mile of the river bank elsewhere receding as far as four miles. The actual bank was mostly marshy, and the river itself, some hundreds of yards in width, effectually covered the flanks which rested on it. In the ten miles which separated the Allied camp between Kessel-Ostheim and Munster from Dillingen no less than eight tributaries join the Danube. Of these the Kessel, immediately in front of the Allied position, the Reichen, barely two miles upstream and just above Dapfheim, and the Nebel, a marsh-fringed stream which enters the Danube just East of Blenheim, alone require mention. Early on August 1st/12th Marlborough and Eugene pushed forward to Dapfheim on reconnaissance, leaving the troops to enjoy the rest their strenuous endeavours had earned. Their intention was to select a camping ground near Hochstadt, two miles or so above Blen-

heim, but on reaching Dapfheim enemy's cavalry were reported in the neighbourhood. The Allied commanders accordingly ascended the church tower to carry out their reconnaissance and were not a little pleased to see French quartermasters laying out a camp beyond the Nebel. Tallard, whether he meant battle or not, was placing himself within their reach, too near to avoid a battle, in a position he would not be given time to fortify.

The decision to attack was taken but it was already after midday and too late to do more that day than bring forward Row's brigade[1] and one of Hessians beyond Dapfheim to secure the passage of the Reichen, all essential to the morrow's advance. These troops were in time to check the enemy's cavalry who were pressing in on the Allied outposts,[2] and also covered the pioneers whom Marlborough at once set to work to improve the road, but the Allies took no further action. They had plenty to do to get ready for their advance which was ordered for 2 A.M. Tallard and the Elector meanwhile moved forward to their new camp, expecting nothing less than an Allied attack. So certain indeed was Tallard that the Allies would never attack that in a letter sent off next morning, when the Allies were already pushing in the French outposts, he declared the enemy were without doubt retiring on Nördlingen.

Tallard's error may provoke a smile but by the accepted teachings of the day it was pardonable. The

[1] This comprised the Guards, 10th (Lincolnshires), 21st (Scots Fusiliers), 23d (Welsh Fusiliers) and 24th (S. W. B.).

[2] *Cf.* Orkney's letter, E. H. R., vol. xix., 308.

Franco-Bavarians outnumbered their opponents.[1] The position they had taken up was secured by the broad Danube against any attempt to outflank its right and the wooded hills to the Northward effectively forbade a turning movement in the direction. Against frontal attack the marshy Nebel was a considerable protection and Blenheim and the other villages which were being put into a state of defence added greatly to the strength of the line. Nine out of ten generals of that day would have hesitated to launch their troops against a position which bristled so with guns and obstacles. But potent incitements urged the Allies to battle. Delay would only make the hostile position more formidable, the Allies had no reinforcements to expect until the fall of Ingolstadt should set Prince Louis free and it was doubtful if their supplies and forage would last till Ingolstadt fell. Moreover Vil-

[1] The estimates vary enormously: Marlborough's letter to the States-General says he had 166 squadrons and 64 battalions, Kane puts the Allies at 181 squadrons and 67 battalions, Hare at 160 and 66, Orkney at 170 and 66, Millner at 188 and 66. Allowing battalions as 500 and squadrons at 120, which at that stage in the campaign is certainly not too low, the total would be approximately 50,000, Millner's actual phrase is "computed 52,000" (*cf.* Appx. B). The Franco-Bavarians are put by Kane at 163 squadrons and 82 battalions, by Millner at 160 and 87, by Marlborough at 147 and 82, by Tallard (*cf.* Pelet, iv, 562) as 123 squadrons and 78 battalions and all accounts agree making them stronger in infantry, if rather weaker in cavalry. Their total is put by Millner at 60,000, by Hare at "6000 more than the Allies," Coxe says 56,000 and thinks this may be an underestimate. But while their numerical superiority was probably not very great there is no question as to their superiority in artillery, since the guns captured were more than double the fifty-six pieces which Marlborough brought into the field (*cf.* Millner, pp. 113 and 127): Parker who puts the Allies' guns as 64 ascribes 120 to the enemy.

leroi was practically unopposed and if Marlborough and his colleague remained inactive they could do nothing to check him should he fall on the Stolhofen lines and destroy them or push into Franconia and by laying that district waste make it impossible for them to maintain their position on the Danube through the winter. A victory over the main force of their enemies was "an indispensable necessity"[1] if the great march to the Danube was to produce its full effect. Marlborough, confident alike in the valour and discipline of his troops, the zealous co-operation of his colleague, and in his own tactical skill, was ready to snatch a victory even over a strong and well-posted enemy.

Early on the morning of August 2nd/13th the Allied troops quitted their camp and advancing in eight columns crossed the Kessel by several bridges. The two outermost columns on the right were composed of Eugene's infantry, next came the "Imperial" cavalry, also in two columns. To their left in two more columns were the bulk of Marlborough's infantry while the left pair of columns contained his cavalry. As the army moved forward the troops who had been covering Dapfheim fell into march formation, forming with some reinforcements yet a ninth column which advanced along the main road covering the artillery. It was in this column that the three brigades of British infantry were included, and its commander was none other than Lord Cutts, the most stalwart of fighting men, the Picton of the day. He had with him fifteen squadrons and twenty battalions and the presence in his column of the British infantry whom Marlborough

[1] Millner, p. 111.

trusted so well marked it out as destined for fighting hot enough even for the celebrated "Salamander" who led it. It had been between three and four o'clock when the marching columns had started and thanks to a mist which concealed their advance they were close to the Nebel before they were perceived. Then, as Marlborough and Eugene, summoning their generals to follow them, rode forward to some rising ground near the village of Wolperstatten to reconnoitre, the alarm spread suddenly through the French lines. "We saw," writes Millner, "all their camp in a motion, their Generals and their Aid de Camps galloping to and fro to put all things in order." Signal guns were fired to recall the foragers whom in their careless security the French had allowed to go out and their outposts fell back hurriedly from the hamlets East of the Nebel, Berghausen, Schwenenbach, and Weilheim, consigning them to the flames as they retired. It was now between 6 and 7 A.M. and the Allies could claim the first trick. They had got into deploying distance unhindered and had the satisfaction of having taken their enemy unawares, no small moral advantage even if the difficulties of deploying over the intricate ground on which they were about to engage made it impossible to follow up this initial gain by attacking before the Franco-Bavarians could set themselves in order. For it was a position of no slight strength which revealed itself to the gaze of Marlborough and Eugene as they surveyed it while their columns were slowly deploying into battle formation.

As already mentioned the Franco-Bavarian position was completely covered in front by the Nebel. This

stream was in itself insignificant but its marshy banks made it a really formidable obstacle. In places it could be forded but throughout the greater part of its course it was only passable where bridged. On the Western bank the ground sloped gradually up on a gentle glacis, the crest of which was several hundreds of yards from the stream. Here the camps were situated, Tallard's army being on the right while that of the Elector and Marsin which had retained its separate organization, stretched away Northward. Three villages, Lutzingen, Oberglau and, Blenheim, all standing on the Western side of the stream, marked respectively the left, the centre, and the right of the position. All were strongly garrisoned and prepared for defence,but the distance between Blenheim and Oberglau was considerably greater than that between Oberglau and Lutzingen, so much so that troops or guns posted in Blenheim and Oberglau were too far from each other to bring effective cross fire to bear on the assailants of the other village. On the opposite bank of the Nebel and rather lower down than Oberglau stood Unterglau, through which ran one of the roads which crossed the stream. Lower down than Unterglau the main road from Donauwörth to Dillingen was carried over the Nebel by a stone bridge while nearer the mouth of the stream and opposite Blenheim a couple of mills acted as a bridge-head for yet another passage. In this lower part of its course the Nebel was at its most marshy, separating just below the stone bridge into two channels, which enclosed a swampy islet. Blenheim itself, the largest of these villages, was within a couple of hundred yards of the Danube and had already been converted into a

formidable position. The Danube guaranteed Tallard's right against being outflanked, the defences of Blenheim gave additional security against any assault aimed at smashing this wing and so rolling up the line from the right. This was the more important because it was behind the right wing that the highroad to Dillingen ran. On the left Lutzingen served the same function as Blenheim while the intricate country on this flank was a sufficient obstacle to make it secure.

But formidable as was this position the keen vision of Marlborough and Eugene did not fail to notice more comforting features also. The arrangement by which Tallard's army had been kept quite separate from that of the Elector and Marsin had had a curious consequence. Each had encamped in the usual fashion with infantry in the centre and cavalry on the wings, hence in the actual centre of the joint position the cavalry of Tallard's left found themselves alongside those of Marsin's right, a state of things the result of accident rather than of design but destined to prove disadvantageous ere the day was out.[1] Even more agreeable to the Allied commanders was it to notice that whereas the French left was drawn up as close as possible to the Nebel, Tallard's men were posted right back at the crest of the long glacis which sloped up from the Nebel, too far away to dispute its passage. The Allies could therefore hope to cross the stream unimpeded and to find room in which to re-form on the far bank before coming to grips with the enemy.

Tallard's choice of position is attributed by Kane to his desire to inflict on his enemy an overwhelming

[1] *Cf.* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 93.

defeat. Rejecting the counsels of his colleagues who were all for making the most of the obstacle of the Nebel, this "haughty, proud Frenchman" declared that such a course would merely lead to the repulse of the Allies and a drawn battle, but that to ensure a decisive victory he would allow the Allies to cross and then taking advantage of the slope hurl them back in disorder into the morass by a vigorous counter-stroke: "the more that come over the more they were sure to kill" he declared. These tactics had it in their favour that the villages of Blenheim and Oberglau, standing forward from the plateau where Tallard's main body stood, flanked the ground on which the Allies must form after crossing and that enfilade fire from these posts might augment the disorder inseparable from the passage of the obstacle; still the exact handling of the counter-stroke required a master's judgment both in choosing the position from which to deliver it and in launching the blow at the right moment. If Tallard delayed a few minutes over setting his squadrons in motion or if his men were too far back from the stream he might have bitter cause to regret its uncontested passage.

Partly to have a strong force available to throw on the Allies' flank after they had crossed the stream, partly because the sight of Cutts's red-coats opposite Blenheim was a warning to beware for that quarter, Tallard's first step was to augment considerably the garrison of Blenheim. Battalion after battalion of the best infantry of France moved down into the village till it was inconveniently overcrowded, while twelve squadrons of dismounted dragoons were placed

between the village and the Danube. With twenty-seven of his battalions in Blenheim and two together with six of Marsin's in Oberglau, Tallard had but nine left for his centre and these he posted in the rear of the great masses of cavalry whom he drew up in two lines at the top of the slope. He had here some eighty squadrons, partly his own, partly Marsin's, eight of the famous *Gens d'armes*, the Household Cavalry of France, being on his right and next to Blenheim. All along his front his numerous artillery was judiciously posted, some low knolls near Blenheim giving a particularly good position for heavy pieces. To the left Marsin's troops extended to Lutzingen, where five Bavarian battalions drawn up *en potence*[1] covered the flank. In this quarter most of the infantry were close in rear of Oberglau, the cavalry drawn up in two lines stretching beyond them to Lutzingen. Unterglau, like the other villages East of the stream, had been evacuated and set on fire as the Allies approached but the mills in front of Blenheim were held by two battalions, probably drawn from the garrison of Blenheim.[2]

Meanwhile the Allies were setting themselves in order. They too were divided into two separate armies, Marlborough's immediate command being much stronger in infantry, of which it had forty-eight battalions to Eugene's eighteen, but only slightly stronger in cavalry, having eighty-six squadrons against seventy-four. To Eugene's forces on the right fell the task of attacking the Elector and Marsin, but his troops had some way to go to reach their appointed places as

[1] *I. e.*, "refused" or flung back almost at right angles to the main line.
[2] *Cf* Parker, p. 104.

the course of the Nebel running from the North-West to South-East caused the Franco-Bavarian left to be somewhat refused. Moreover, the ground to be traversed was much intersected by ditches and ravines and delayed progress. Eugene's movements were also hampered by the French batteries which about 9 A.M. opened a brisk cannonade. To answer this and to cover his deployment Marlborough pushed forward his own guns, taking special care, Hare tells us, to see to the position and fire of each battery himself. His main body he drew up in four lines, adopting a formation which quite surprised the French by its novelty; they were to understand its object well enough before long. In front he posted seventeen battalions of infantry, in the second and third lines came the cavalry, thirty-six and thirty-five squadrons respectively, in the last line were another eleven battalions of foot. To the left of the main body was Cutts's column, destined to attack Blenheim; this pushed forward at once to the mills East of the village and speedily mastered that passage. The detachment posted here made but a feeble resistance and fell back at once: Cutts thereupon pushed his leading brigades across the stream where they had to remain halted for some hours, enduring a sharp cannonade and waiting till the whole Allied force was in position.

The period of waiting was unexpectedly prolonged, for Eugene's men found the obstacles to their progress hard to overcome, and Marlborough's troops suffered not a little from the well-sustained fire of the French batteries, though their own artillery replied effectually.[1]

[1] *Cf.* Millner, p. 115.

The time was turned to good purpose by the pioneers, who not only managed to repair the stone bridge below Unterglau but laid five pontoon bridges across the river, while the precaution was taken of causing the second line of cavalry to provide themselves with fascines. At length, however, Marlborough's patience was rewarded: Eugene reported himself ready and at once the order to advance was given.

It was already past midday when Cutts launched his attack upon Blenheim, for, strong as this position was, to attack it was absolutely essential if the main body's passage of the Nebel was to be covered against enfilade. The attack was led by Row's British brigade.[1] "Those five battalions," writes Millner, "advanced on with undaunted courage and with unparalleled intrepidity attacked the village on the muzzles of the enemy." Though a heavy fire was poured into them at short range they held their fire till they had pushed right up to the palisades which fringed the village; then Row gave the signal by thrusting his sword into the palisade, the volley was delivered, and the men dashing forward tried to force their way in. But their efforts were in vain; "exposed to a fire much superior to theirs" (Millner), they were forced back and thrown into confusion by a charge of the nearest French squadrons. Help was at hand in the shape of the Hessians of Cutts's next brigade, whose opportune volley brought the French horse to a standstill. Before the Gendarmerie could rally, Lumley, the commander of the British cavalry, threw in five of his squadrons which had just made their way

[1] *Cf.* p. 214.

across the Nebel. These were at first successful and hurled the Gendarmerie back, but, pursuing too far, they came under flanking fire from Blenheim and were in their turn charged by fresh cavalry and thrown back. Again the Hessians intervened and checked the French and meanwhile Cutts pushed forward another British brigade, that of Ferguson.[1] This, however, fared no better than its predecessor, but though beaten back returned to the assault, supported by Row's men who despite their heavy casualties and the fall of their gallant brigadier had rallied and advanced again. Nothing could have exceeded the devotion and gallantry with which the British infantry made attack after attack on the superior forces opposed to them. Orkney wrote that they had "behaved to admiration." They were able in Kane's words to "drive the enemy from the skirts of the village into the body of it" and if they could not carry the village they kept the garrison fully employed. Then Marlborough intervened and ordered Cutts to abstain from pressing home his attacks but to draw up his troops round the outskirts of the village so as to prevent the enemy's infantry from sallying out. At the crisis of the fight therefore the bulk of Tallard's infantry found themselves penned up in Blenheim by a force hardly two thirds their numbers. More than once they endeavoured to break out, but, cramped up as they were in the village, they had no room to form up properly there and when they endeavoured to form up outside they were "mowed down by our platoons" (Kane), or, as Parker puts it, "they could not rush out without getting on the very points of our bayonets." Cutts

[1] 2nd Royal Scots, 15th, 26th, and 37th.

and his men thus did their work well and when Tallard, in urgent need of infantry to help his hard-pressed centre, sent to Blenheim for reinforcements his troops there "could neither help him or themselves" (*Military History*). Indeed it seems that Marlborough was actually able to divert infantry from his left to support the centre as in the final stages of the battle battalions of the third brigade of British were among the troops from the centre who moved round behind Blenheim to intercept the French retreat.

While this furious contest was raging round Blenheim Marlborough's main body had made its way down to the Nebel and begun the passage, some of the cavalry fording the stream, the infantry passing over the bridges. It was no easy business, even when unopposed, but one by one the battalions and squadrons "passed over as well as they could and formed as fast as they got over, Tallard all this while as a man infatuated looking on" (Kane). Thus the Allies, being "given all the time we wanted" (Millner) while the enemy "kept very quiet on the hill," were able to form up for their main attack. In doing this they were not a little helped by three squadrons of British cavalry under Colonel Palmes[1] which advanced some little way forward to give the troops in rear room to form. Seeing this handful dangerously exposed seven French squadrons advanced against them. Palmes did not wait to be attacked. He advanced so promptly that he caught the French as they were wheeling outwards to the wings in order to outflank him. Taken in the middle of this evolution they were routed completely (Kane).

[1] Palmes was in command of the present 6th D. G.

Pursuing too far, however, Palmes was checked, overpowered, and forced back in some disorder.

Farther to the right the Allies had to reckon with Oberglau, which flanked the meadows beyond the Nebel from the North just as Blenheim did on the South. But Marlborough had provided against this and detailed the Prince of Holstein Beck with ten battalions[1] to assail the village Covered by this detachment the Danish and Hanoverian cavalry formed up on the right of the main body; Hompesch with the Dutch took the centre, while on the left were the British and more Hanoverians. Simultaneously the leading infantry with the main body took post between the first and second lines of cavalry. However, before the main body was completely formed Tallard struck. Apparently he had been startled by the defeat of the cavalry whom Palmes had fought (Kane), and anxious not to let the favourable moment slip he sent his horsemen charging down the slope. At first the charge went well. The first line of the Allied cavalry had barely completed forming and the French horse favoured by the slope broke their line and thrust them back on the Nebel. But then was disclosed the purpose of that innovation in the drawing up of the main body by which Marlborough had so puzzled the French. As his discomfited troopers cleared away through the intervals between the battalions behind them these poured in volleys at close range into the pursuing French horse.[2]

[1] These apparently were drawn from the seventeen originally in the front line of the main body.

[2] The similarity of this manœuvre to that of Gustavus who had posted select parties of musketeers between his squadrons at Breitenfeld is obvious.

As the French checked under this fire the second line of the Allied horse advanced and their charge hurled the French back on their supports. Bitterly must Tallard have regretted the advantage in time and space he had given to his adversaries and to add to his consternation the Blenheim garrison, whom "he had expected to have marched out and fallen upon our rear" (Kane), could do no more than bring a little flanking fire to bear on the left of the Allied horse; Cutts's infantry commanded the outlets from the village and forbade any debouching from it.

Meanwhile elsewhere the Allies were faring badly. The Oberglau garrison, headed by the Irish Brigade in the French service, met Holstein Beck's advance with a dashing counter-attack. The Prince's leading battalions were routed, an appeal to some of Eugene's squadrons went unanswered, he himself was wounded and taken. "There is," writes Colin,[1] "in a battle a moment of crisis where the character of the generals reveals itself most particularly. Defeat seems complete and inevitable: however, there are reserves to be thrown in, it is possible to win back victory. Prudence does not dare to put in its last reserves: prudence would keep them for happier times, but a Condé at Nordlingen, a Bonaparte at Marengo, do not accept defeat." So it was with Marlborough now. Holstein Beck's overthrow threatened the ruin of his whole plan but the check merely called forth the Duke's readiness and resource. He at once pushed forward some guns from near Weilheim to pour in their fire at short range, brought up three battalions which had already crossed

[1] *Transformations*, p. 159.

the Nebel lower down and with them covered the right flank of his cavalry which Holstein Beck's defeat had exposed. Next he threw in some squadrons to check the victorious French and allow him to rally the Prince's infantry, whom before long he was leading forward again to the attack. The struggle fluctuated but at last the Allies prevailed and the French were thrust back into and behind Oberglau. They retained the village indeed but the Allies' attacks "kept those within it besieged" so that the rest of the Allies could now "march before it and attack the cavalry of the enemy with great liberty."[1] The menace to Marlborough's main body thus removed his great attack could now go forward unhindered.

During all this time the Allied right had been making but slow progress. Suffering considerably from the heavy artillery fire poured into his columns from the flank and delayed by the ground, "which was so embarrassed with brambles, hedges, and other incumbrances" that "there was no marching by columns" but they had to advance "as well as they could to the rivulet,"[2] Eugene had found his task most formidable. His infantry, two thirds Prussians the rest Danes, fought stoutly and captured a battery in front of Lutzingen. But after an initial success the Imperial cavalry gave way before a counter-stroke by the Bavarian horse and by retiring exposed the flank of the Prussian foot. These were charged in flank and driven headlong from the guns they had won. On this the Danish battalions fell back also and it was only the exertions of Eugene and Prince Leopold of Anhalt, the com-

[1] *Military History*, i., 159. [2] *Ibid*, i., 158.

mander of the Prussians, that rallied the infantry near a wood just East of the Nebel. The attack was resumed with no better success, for the Imperial cavalry were caught in both flanks by fire from Oberglau and Lutzingen when trying to cross the Nebel. Again Eugene rallied them while Anhalt brought up the infantry farther to the right trying to outflank the Bavarians. But the cavalry had had enough: their advance was hesitating and lacked vigour and before long they were streaming away in disorder. Eugene then, "seeing no likelihood of being able to rally his cavalry," left them and placing himself at the head of the infantry led them forward against Lutzingen[1] but though his attack gained ground the rout of his cavalry had isolated him and on their right wing the day was far from being decided in the Allies' favour.

But meanwhile in the centre the decision was being reached. About four o'clock Marlborough's preparations were complete, the cavalry formed up in two lines, Charles Churchill's infantry posted in rear with intervals through which the horse could retire if pressed, while Colonel Blood, Marlborough's chief artillery officer, managed to bring forward some guns to give close support. The details of the fight are not quite clear. Parker's version is that a pause followed the retirement of the French cavalry to their old position after the failure of their first attack, during which period the Allied infantry and guns were in action. Kane represents the cavalry fight as swaying to and fro for some time and finally going in favour of the Allies, but says that when the Allied cavalry reached the top of the

[1] *Cf.* Millner, p. 123.

hill on which the French had originally stood the battalions of Tallard's centre advanced and checked them till "our foot and Colonel Blood with nine field pieces came up which kept them employed." Marlborough then, taking advantage of this fire-fight, rallied his cavalry for a final effort, for he could see that the French horse "had no great stomach for renewing the battle but rather seemed in a tottering condition" and that another charge would probably prove decisive. Millner's account agrees on the whole with this version and is corroborated by Lord Orkney who describes[1] how, having got over with nine battalions and some guns, he "marched to sustain the horse" whom he "found repulsed, calling out for foot, being pressed by the Gendarmerie": "I went," he writes, "to the head of several esquadrons and got 'em to rally and form on my right and left and brought up four pieces of cannon and then charged."

But this charge was all that was needed. At the critical moment Tallard had ridden off to Blenheim to see if he could not obtain help for his centre.[2] He had already appealed to Marsin for a counter-stroke from Oberglau only to be answered that Marsin had as much on his hands as he could manage[3] No succour was to be found and as the Allied cavalry came forward the French flinched from the shock. For cavalry to receive a charge at the halt with fire action only was tantamount to inviting overthrow but this was all the French attempted A straggling volley at some distance availed nothing to stop Marlborough's charge,

[1] E. H. R., xix., 308.
[2] Brodrick, p. 121.
[3] Millner, p. 118.

and as the Allies closed with them even the Maison du Roi went about and fled. The battalions of the French centre, which had been getting the worst of the fire-fight were thus left in the lurch and were already wavering when the Allied squadrons swept down upon them. They did their best but were cut down to a man. Parker crossing the field next day saw them lying dead in the ranks in which they had stood. The victorious Allies pressed on, fell on the French cavalry whom Tallard was hastily trying to rally behind their camp, and sent them flying headlong. The majority made for Hochstadt but, closely pursued by the Allies they were in such disorder that they came thronging upon the bridges in greater weight than these could stand and, as at the Schellenberg, the collapse of the bridges completed the disaster. Hundreds of the fugitives were drowned and the ruin of Tallard's horse was beyond repair. Only those who had made off away from the river succeeded in escaping.

This great success in the centre had been decisive. A wedge had been driven right through the French position so that Marsin and the Elector, still fighting stoutly between Oberglau and Lutzingen, found themselves not merely separated from the defenders of Blenheim but threatened in flank. There was need to be quick, for Marlborough, directly he saw Tallard's cavalry flying in irretrievable disorder, sent orders to Hompesch to leave part of his squadrons only to pursue the fugitives and to move to his right to intercept the Elector. Meanwhile the toils were closing round the garrison of Blenheim. Directly the last cavalry charge proved successful Charles Churchill wheeled some of his

infantry to the left so as to prolong Cutts's line and seal up all possible avenues of escape. Orkney too was prompt to act and pushing across the little Maulweyer, which flows through Blenheim into the Danube, planted his four guns so as to play on the village.[1] Then while Hompesch and Lumley pressed on after Tallard's cavalry and so secured him against any danger of interruption in rear, Orkney drew his troops "immediately round the village to the Danube side" and arranging with Churchill and Cutts for a simultaneous movement began to press his attack.

Beset on every side the garrison of Blenheim were in hopeless plight. Yet for some time longer they maintained a gallant resistance. Two regiments, Artois and Provence, attempted without success to cut their way out. Orkney met them and drove many of them into the Danube, where among others General Clérambault, the commander of the garrison, was drowned. Churchill too pressed in on the village and the indefatigable Cutts brought his battered but indomitable battalions forward once again. The 8th Foot (King's) stormed a barrier constructed to cover the retreat. The Buffs, well backed up by the Scots Greys and the 5th Dragoons, planted themselves in rear of the village and checked all attempts to break out.[2] Still the

[1] Orkney's account gives the fullest details of the closing stage of the battle.

[2] The Dartmouth account (R. U. S. I. *Journal*, 1898) shows the Buffs and 8th as in the third British infantry brigade, this was in the second line and the part played by these battalions makes it seem as if Marlborough must have drawn this brigade off for use elsewhere when he directed Cutts to suspend his efforts to storm Blenheim. There are hints of this in Lediard (i., 376) and in the Dartmouth account, while

French resisted stubbornly. Orkney, repulsed once, came on again, "pierced to the very heart of the village" and began attacking the churchyard which had a high stone wall round it. This strong point for a time held him up but he captured and set on fire some houses behind which the enemy had drawn up.

This [he writes] we could easily perceive annoyed them very much and seeing two brigades appear as if they intended to push their way through our troops, who were very much fatigued, it came into my head to beat a parley, which they accepted of and immediately their brigadier de Nouville capitulat with me to be prisoner at descretione and lay down their arms.

Simultaneously another detachment had surrendered to General Ingoldsby and when Orkney sent his aide-de-camp to the Marquis de Blanzac, now in command in Blenheim, to point out the hopelessness of his situation and invite him to capitulate, the situation was after a short parley accepted: Navarre, one of the most famous regiments in the French service, burnt their colours to avoid the shame of seeing them taken, but they together with other famous units like du Roi and Languedoc had to march out as prisoners of war, the total taken in

Orkney's narrative makes it seem probable that these battalions were with Churchill. It is unfortunate that three of the four soldier-diarists present at Blenheim belonged to the same regiment, the Royal Irish, and that they give very few details as to the parts played by the individual British battalions. The doings of Hamilton's brigade are most obscure. It is nowhere stated to have actually attacked Blenheim as Row's and Ferguson's did and its losses in officers were decidedly lower than those of the other brigades (cf. *Blenheim Roll*). In default of better evidence certainty cannot be achieved but the balance favours the view that the brigade was diverted from the direct attack to support the centre.

Blenheim coming to nearly ten thousand officers and men. It was a hard fate for the best infantry of France, the very stubbornness of their stand had, through the faulty tactics of their commander and Marlborough's skill in turning Tallard's errors to account, contributed to the completeness of their misfortune. Less gallant troops would have quitted Blenheim earlier but the gallantry of Cutts's men who had pressed the defenders of Blenheim with such unremitting courage and determination had as much and more to do with the capture than Tallard's blunders or the promptitude with which Charles Churchill and Orkney had sealed the exits for Blenheim.

Meanwhile better fortune had attended the other portion of the Franco-Bavarian army whom Marlborough's success in the centre had placed in peril. The Elector and Marsin had been quick to perceive their danger and fortunately for them they were not so closely engaged but that they contrived to break off and get clear. Eugene was apparently reforming his infantry before renewing the attack and also waiting for a fresh advance by his cavalry who were rallying some way behind. The Franco-Bavarians therefore fell back in good order, covered by the smoke of the villages of Oberglau and Lutzingen which they had fired. Eugene pressed after them. Hompesch hastened to intercept their retreat but the Elector and Marsin profited by the failing light. The evening was already well advanced and Hompesch seeing Eugene "at some distance behind the Elector and appearing to be part of his army"[1] naturally halted to make certain.

[1] Millner, p. 123.

Eugene likewise mistook Hompesch for Tallard's men coming to succour the Elector and in the growing darkness it was some time before identity was established. The Elector "continued marching off with great precipitation" and was already behind the cover of the morass of Merselingen by the time the Allies had got into touch: darkness and the exhaustion of the Allied troops forbade any pursuit into the woods and night.

But if the French left had escaped the Allied victory was sufficiently crushing. Orkney spoke but the truth when he called it "the greatest and compleatest victory that has been gained these many ages." In all his great career Turenne had never won such a success; Conde's triumph at Rocroi, Gustavus's great victory at Breitenfeld are the only parallels in the previous century for Cromwell's "crowning mercies" of Naseby, Dunbar, and Worcester, if equally complete, were on a smaller scale. At a cost of some 12,500 casualties the Allies had inflicted a staggering blow on their opponents, whose loss in prisoners alone exceeded that figure. What with the fugitives drowned in the Danube and the losses inflicted on the retreating army in its flight across the Black Forest by the peasantry who hung round its flanks and rear, cutting off stragglers and greatly assisting the cavalry of the Allies to harass and distress them,[1] the losses of the Franco-Bavarians may well have amounted to the 38,000 at which Millner reckons them. Marsin's own account written from Ulm, before the retreat across the Black Forest, when his ranks were certainly further depleted by desertions as well as through the pursuit, estimates his force at but 62

[1] *Cf.* Coke MSS., vol. iii., 42.

squadrons and 31 battalions—little over 20,000. Estimates of the spoils taken vary, Parker puts the guns and mortars at 117, the colours at 129, the standards at 110. Millner puts the guns a little higher and adds "seventeen pair of kettle-drums, fifteen pontoons, twenty-four barrels, eight cases of silver, thirty-four fine coaches, three hundred loaded mules, and three thousand six hundred tents, standing or struck." Moreover among the captures was Tallard himself, taken in trying to make his way to Hochstadt when he found efforts to rally his horsemen unavailing.

On the Allied side the losses had fallen somewhat more heavily in proportion on Marlborough's army than on Eugene's. The British had borne their full share. Millner, who put the total Allied loss at 4542 killed and 7942 wounded, credits his countrymen with 2234 casualties including 57 officers killed and 144 wounded, which in proportion to strengths exceeds that of any other contingent, though Dutchmen, Hanoverians, and Hessians had all lost heavily and the ranks of Eugene's Prussian and Danish foot were grievously thinned.[1] These losses moreover followed within six weeks on the heavy casualties incurred by the infantry at the Schellenberg. The regiments who fought at Blenheim may well be proud to see that

[1] The *Blenheim Roll*, however, puts the officer casualties considerably higher, 98 killed and 195 wounded, out of a total of 716 present. It is possible to glean from it some idea of the part played by the different units. There was hardly one but had been hard hit, Row's (21st) had lost 23 officers, Ingoldsby's (23rd) 24, Howe's (15th) 23, the two battalions of the Royals 42 between them, Webb's (8th) alone had less than a double-figure loss. In the cavalry Wood's, Wyndham's, and Schomberg's Horse (now 3rd, 6th, and 7th D. G) lost between them 32 officers.

name on their colours. Their share in such a victory crowning their achievement at the Schellenberg had raised the reputation of the British Army to a level with that of the best troops of the Grand Monarque. Englishmen had had a high fame for military prowess in the days of the Black Prince and Henry V., but for over two centuries the memories of those days had grown dim and English soldiership had been under a cloud. Marlborough and his men had shown themselves worthy descendants of the archers and spearsmen of Crecy and Agincourt, and had triumphantly vindicated the reputation of England's fighting men.

There have been battles in English history where the errors or want of skill of the commander have been redeemed by the stubborn valour and sheer hard fighting of regimental officers and men. Albuera was such a one, Maida was won not by Stuart but by his subordinates, Inkerman will always be remembered as "a soldier's battle." But not even the malevolence of Marlborough's bitterest detractors, not even Swift's envenomed pen, has ventured to put Blenheim in this category. It is no disparagement to Cutts and his much enduring men who hurled themselves repeatedly against the defences of Blenheim, to the cavalry who charged and rallied and charged again till at last they broke through and saw their opponents fly before them, to Eugene's stubborn Danes and Prussians, to subordinates like Orkney and Hompesch and Charles Churchill and Lumley who seconded their commander skilfully and promptly, not even to Eugene himself, who gripped and held Marsin and the Elector firmly while victory was won elsewhere, to claim the lion's

share of the credit for Blenheim as Marlborough's due. Eugene may claim a share in the decision to attack, but there is no reason to believe that it originated with him rather than with the man who had made a similar decision in almost precisely similar circumstances at the Schellenberg. The originality in the ordering of his own wing was clearly Marlborough's alone and at every crisis of the fight Marlborough is seen intervening. Orkney wrote that the Duke "had been everywhere from one attack to another and ventured his person too much." Brodrick adds that he exposed himself repeatedly, a cannon-ball grazed under his horse's belly, and covered him with dust." It was Marlborough who rallied Holstein-Beck's infantry when the Irish "Wild Geese" drove them back, it was Marlborough who placed the guns so as to help the infantry and the infantry to support the cavalry, Marlborough who turned Cutts's attack on Blenheim from an assault into a holding attack which effectually "contained" a superior force and prevented it from interfering at the critical point. And the success of the decisive attack was no mere accident, no sudden inspiration, but the result of a definite plan, carefully aimed at profiting by his adversary's errors, steadily pursued despite checks and reverses, worked out with care, patience, and resource. His refusal to admit defeat, his reasoned obstinacy in persevering with his plan had been crushingly vindicated. Addison was indeed happily inspired when he wrote that Marlborough had "taught the doubtful battle how to rage," for doubtful the issue had long remained and neither the completeness of the victory nor the utter rout of

the defeated need detract from the credit due to them for their long and stubborn fight. The French were beaten but, like the Spanish infantry at Rocroi where another reputation for invincibility had been overthrown, not without honour. Tallard's errors may seem obvious enough when trenchantly exposed by Marlborough. But had a general of less tactical insight and resource, with less readiness to take great risks and less resolution and skill in execution, been on the east bank of the Nebel on the morning of August 2nd/13th the blunders now so patent would probably have escaped detection. Orkney candidly admitted, "I confess it is entirely owing to my Lord Duke, for, I declare, had I been to give my opinion, I had been against it, considering the ground where they were encamped and the strength of the army."[1] Even Richard Pope, who had written of the Schellenberg as "a considerable advantage purchased at a dear rate, rather than a victory," was enthusiastic over Marlborough's skill and courage and hailed Blenheim as "the greatest and most glorious action that has happened in several ages."[2]

The victory had been won. There still remained nearly three months of the normal campaigning season in which to improve it. Immediate pursuit except by some of the lighter cavalry was not attempted. The troops were exhausted by their strenuous exertions on the march and battlefield, and positively encumbered by the number of their prisoners, whom Millner calls "a luggage that retarded their progress four or five days." But there was no urgent need to pursue. The

[1] E. H. R., xix., 311. [2] Coke MSS., iii., 40.

relics of the Franco-Bavarians were in full retreat for the Rhine and did not mean to stop short of it. They crossed the Danube at Lauvingen, nine miles upstream, summoned the garrison of Augsburg to join them,[1] and after a brief pause at Ulm, where they left a small garrison, continued their march Westward without waiting to see if Villeroi would come to their help. On August 8th/19th the Allies set themselves on the march again. They had summoned Louis of Baden to rejoin them, being anxious to concentrate all the troops they could collect for an invasion of Alsace. Louis joined them reluctantly. He had hoped to associate his name with the capture of the virgin fortress of Ingolstadt, which was still resisting, and Kane declares that he "never could forgive" his colleagues for "robbing him of a share of the glory of the late victory," so that it is not surprising to find that he did not fall in with their proposals but urged that the Allies should undertake the siege of Landau. To this Marlborough and Eugene ultimately agreed and on August 15th/26th the Allied army set out for the Rhine. As they advanced through Würtemberg Parker notes that they were warmly welcomed by the inhabitants who flocked out to meet them, full of thankfulness at being preserved from the fury of the Elector of Bavaria, while the effect of the victory was seen in the promptitude with which the Duke of Würtemberg complied with a request for wagons.[2] On August 25th/September 5th Marlborough reached the Rhine at Philipsburg, where the river was crossed next day by the English and Danish cavalry. The main body of his infantry, including the British

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 113.

[2] Disp., i., 419.

battalions, followed on August 27th/September 7th and encamped at Spires.[1] The army had been considerably augmented, the troops from Stolhofen having joined, and though Villeroi had rallied to him the relics of the army beaten at Blenheim he was in no mood to fight. He took post on the Queich about ten miles from Spires, thinking to cover Landau, but, to Marlborough's surprise and satisfaction, fell back in confusion behind the Lauter directly the Allies advanced against him (August 30th/September 10th). "If they had not been the most frightened people in the world," the Duke wrote to Godolphin,[2] "they would never have quitted these parts. . . . Nothing can now hinder our going on with the siege, provided we get a sufficient artillery." The actual siege was entrusted to Prince Louis, Marlborough and Eugene, with whom were the British troops, taking post on the Lauter to cover him. The trenches were opened on September 5th/16th but Louis of Baden, being but ill-supplied with engineers, ammunition, and money, had to draw on Marlborough for these. Pope wrote "the Imperialists undertake sieges without cannon, ammunition, and engineers with as much assurance as they did a war without money, credit, or troops.[3] Fortunately Ulm, which a detachment had been left to besiege, fell on August 31st/September 11th and with it the Allies acquired large supplies of stores and artillery, both badly needed. Marlborough, however, was not merely content to sit inactive and cover the siege. Villeroi's reluctance to fight encouraged him to risk an enterprise, which in view of all his troops had

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 116.
[2] Disp., i., 462.
[3] Coke MSS., iii., 48.

gone through,[1] can only be pronounced most daring. This was to move across into the Moselle valley and lay siege to Trarbach. The country in between, the Northern Vosges, was difficult in the extreme but neither its wild or mountainous character nor the badness of the roads deterred Marlborough. He was already framing a great design for the next year's campaign and as a preliminary he desired to secure the Lower Moselle.

Accordingly Marlborough moved off on October 9th/20th with 50 squadrons, 27 battalions, and 18 guns in charge of the trusty Blood,[2] the British he left on the Lauter with Eugene, taking with him Germans in British pay.[3] Marching with remarkable celerity through "the terriblest country that can be imagined for the march of an army with cannon"[4] he reached Trèves on October 18th/29th, just anticipating a French force which was moving on the city. Trarbach was immediately invested. It held out till the middle of December, but the French could do nothing to succour either it or Landau, though the latter siege, indifferently conducted by Prince Louis, dragged interminably on. "The Germans," wrote one of Coke's correspondents, "lose a world of time at the siege and will not take the advice of those who know more of the matter than they,"[5] and Pope, who with the rest of the British was engaged "in the most disagreeable thing I ever met . . . covering a siege which advances very slowly

[1] He had already sent five of his most shattered British battalions, the 2/1st, 3rd, 10th, 21st, and 37th, down the Rhine as escort to the French prisoners, a journey calculated to take three weeks.

[2] Portland MSS., iv., 142.

[3] Kane, p. 58.

[4] Disp., i., 518.

[5] Coke MSS., iii., 49.

. . . in a place where there is not the least forage to be found," declared that Prince Louis was revenging himself for not sharing the glory of Blenheim by spinning out the siege till Marlborough's cavalry was ruined.[1] Marlborough's daring in attempting to move to the Moselle so late in the season and when to secure Landau might be thought a sufficient undertaking had altogether surprised Villeroi. Indeed, even before Landau fell, seeing that the French had resigned themselves to its loss, Marlborough had sent another four British battalions down the Rhine to Holland for a much needed rest, and directly Landau fell (October 28th/November 8th) the remaining British infantry were shipped off from Philipsburg.

The close of the campaigning season of 1704 thus found the Allies well established in winter quarters West of the Rhine. Marlborough wrote to Godolphin that "this would give France as much uneasiness as anything that has been done this summer," and it was some indication of what was in his mind that he arranged to leave the British artillery to winter on the Moselle.[2] Meanwhile the conclusion of the Convention of Ilbesheim with the Electress of Bavaria (November) had put the finishing touch to the work of the Schellenberg and Blenheim by securing the Imperialist position in Southern Germany. This convention, in which Marlborough's hand may be clearly seen, was more favourable to the Electress than the Emperor quite liked. He itched to outlaw the Elector, who had betaken himself with the shattered remnant of his troops to Brabant, and was anxious to annex his

[1] Coke MSS., iii., 51. [2] Disp., i., 507.

dominions, but Marlborough had hopes of inducing the Elector to change sides and of employing him and his troops in Italy and insisted on moderate terms; the fortresses, had to surrender, the troops were disbanded and the country placed under Austrian administration, but the Electress was allowed to remain at Munich with a guaranteed revenue.

Marlborough's labours did not end with the campaign. Before he could set his face homeward he had to visit Berlin to wring from the King of Prussia an addition to his contingent. Reinforcements were urgently needed for Italy where things had gone badly for the Allies and the existing Prussian contingent was engaged only for service in Germany. Arriving at Berlin on November 15th/25th with the prestige of Blenheim behind him Marlborough was no less successful in diplomacy than in battle. Frederick was nervous about "the commotions in the North,"[1] where Charles XII. and Peter the Great were at each other's throats, but Marlborough was able to overcome his reluctance to spare more troops and for a subsidy of two hundred thousand crowns from England and one hundred thousand from Holland, and by pledging the Emperor to provide bread,[2] he obtained a promise of eight thousand Prussians for Italy. This accomplished he quitted Berlin on November 17th/28th and landed in England on December 3rd/14th after an absence of nearly eight months.

[1] Disp., i., 543.

[2] He writes that he was "at last, in order to make an end, obliged in some measure to engage the Emperor" (Disp., i., 550). Luckily in January he was able to note that there were "like to be no obstructions at Vienna."

These eight months it is not too much to say had changed the whole aspect of Europe. At their close the Allies were as markedly in the ascendant as their adversaries had been at the beginning of the year. And that this was the work of Marlborough and his men is not to be denied. Elsewhere things had by no means gone well with the Allies. In the Netherlands Auverquerque had achieved nothing. In Italy the Duke of Savoy had been hard pressed to maintain his position and failing his promised assistance the joint attack on Toulon in co-operation with Rooke's fleet (*cf.* p. 190) had fallen through. In the Spanish Peninsula where Schomberg had been out-manœuvred by Berwick the Allied cause had made no progress. Rooke had indeed, after the breakdown of the Toulon project, attacked and captured Gibraltar (July 26th/August 6th) and foiled the Comte de Toulouse's attempt to recover it in the one big naval action of the war, the battle off Malaga (August 11th/22nd), a battle unwisely overpraised by the High Tories for party purposes, but still in its results an undeniable success for the Allies.[1] But, for all their importance immediate and potential, neither Malaga nor the capture of Gibraltar had wrought the change in Europe. It was Marlborough's march to the Danube, followed by his successes at the Schellenberg and at Blenheim, to which this was due. The blows inflicted on French arms, the shattering of that reputation for invincibility handed down from Turenne and Luxemburg, were alone of the utmost importance quite apart from the material results of the campaign. These have been nowhere so

[1] Cf. *England in the Mediterranean*, vol. ii, p. 276.

well summarized as by Mr. Leadam (vol. ix. of Longman's *Political History of England*, p. 57):

The battle of Blenheim marked the first great defeat of a French army in the field during the reign of Louis XIV. and the first great success which had fallen to the arms of the Grand Alliance. It saved Vienna, it delivered up Bavaria to the conqueror, it fortified the resolution of the German princes, it reinvigorated the war party in the Netherlands and it confirmed the belief of Heinsius in the genius of Marlborough and discredited the former intervention of the field-deputies. In Spain it determined the defection of some influential grandees from Philip V. to the Archduke. In Savoy it reanimated the resistance of the Duke. But beyond all these effects it stirred the English nation to enthusiasm for the war.

APPENDIX B

THE BRITISH STRENGTH AT BLENHEIM

Mr. Dalton's *Blenheim Roll* gives the actual strengths of the British units engaged.

King's	Dragoon Guards	(Lumley's)	25 Officers	457 men
3rd	" "	(Wood's)	25 "	288 "
5th	" "	(Cadogan's)	14 "	135 "
6th	" "	(Wyndham's)	25 "	286 "
7th	" "	(Schomberg's)	24 "	246 "
2nd	Dragoons	(Lord J. Hay's)	25 "	315 "
5th	"	(Ross's)	26 "	298 "
1st Bn.	1st Guards		36 "	553 "
1st "	Royal Scots	(Orkney's)	38 "	601 "
2nd "	" "	"	37 "	540 "
3rd Foot		(Churchill's)	31 "	559 "
8th "		(Webb's)	35 "	704 "
10th "		(North & Grey's)	40 "	540 "
15th "		(Howe's)	39 "	545 "
16th "		(Derby's)	31 "	632 "
18th "		(Hamilton's)	36 "	542 "
21st "		(Row's)	36 "	593 "
23rd "		(Ingoldsby's)	33 "	487 "
24th "		(Marlborough's)	35 "	489 "
26th "		(Ferguson's)	40 "	613 "
37th "		(Meredith's)	32 "	543 "

This gives an average of over 150 per squadron and of practically 600 per battalion, figures which are remarkably high—that for Webb's regiment is almost incredible—seeing that the troops had been in the field for three months, had accomplished some remarkable marches and had been heavily engaged at the Schellenberg. It is a testimony to the care which was taken of the troops. To get the actual total present there must be added 13 officers and 140 men of the Artillery (these would be gunners only, the drivers were still hired civilians), 9 officers, and 38 men of the "Engineers," 16 doctors and 5 officers and 11 men of the Ordnance, making a grand total of 10,786 of all ranks, approximately a fifth of the Allied Army.

As to the organization of the British infantry there is some doubt, they were in three brigades commanded by Row, Hamilton, and Ferguson but the distribution of the battalions differs in different authorities: that quoted by Mr. Fortescue (vol. i., p. 441) from Dumont's *Histoire Militaire* varying in four cases from one in the contemporary account reproduced in the R. U. S. I. *Journal* for 1898 from an old print lent by Lord Dartmouth.

CHAPTER XI

GERMAN PRINCES AND DUTCH DEPUTIES

THE MOSELLE DESIGN—DIFFICULTIES AND SHORTCOMINGS—THE RETURN TO FLANDERS—VILLEROI'S LINES—THE PASSAGE AT TIRLEMONT—THE HALT—DUTCH OBSTRUCTIONS—DIPLOMATIC LABOURS.

MARLBOROUGH'S reception in England left little doubt as to the effect of Blenheim on the political situation. True that the Tories in the Commons had managed to couple Malaga with Blenheim as if of equal value when the usual address to the Crown was voted on the opening of Parliament; it was their last success. But the hostility of a party on the verge of the defeat which befell them at the general election shortly afterwards was more than balanced by the honours showered on him from every side. He was entertained in state by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London. He was made Colonel of the First Foot Guards. There was a triumphal procession through the City, along the Strand and Pall Mall and through the Park, to take the trophies of Blenheim from the Tower to Westminster Hall. More solid and acceptable was the formal grant (February 28th/March 11th) of the Honour and Manor of Woodstock and of the Hundred of Wootton, with the promise of the stately house which now commemorates Blenheim. Moreover, increased supplies were cheerfully voted together with an augmentation of the Army by six new battalions, while the gaps in the old units[1]

[1] The British infantry were 6000 below establishment. Disp., i., 510.

were more than made good. Indeed in May Marlborough could write that the British horse and dragoons who had wintered abroad were outnumbered by such as had come over fresh for the campaign.[1] The Duke's correspondence reveals the multifarious occupations of the winter months. Questions about the exchange of prisoners, about payment of subsidies to Allies, about promotions, commands, and appointments, are mixed up with complimentary letters to Electors and other persons whom it was prudent to humour and with reproofs to Stepney at Vienna who had quarrelled with the Imperial minister Wratislaw on quite trivial matters. And all the while the plans for the coming campaign had to be worked out.

A clue to that scheme had been given by the final stages of the previous year's operations. Marlborough intended to put into practice his alleged design for 1704 and to advance up the Moselle. Such a move if successful would turn the French position in the Netherlands and at the same time threaten their tenure of Alsace. Major Cranstoun of the Cameronians[2] wrote that the Duke's design was to have "opened the campaign with the siege of either Saarlouis or Thionville and after that to have besieged and taken Metz, which, if we had done no more, secured us of winter quarters in Lorraine and cut entirely the French off from Strasburg and Breisach."[3] Part of the plan was that the Army of the Empire should invade Alsace, and Marlborough calculated[4] that this simultaneous attack would be quite as effective as concentration in

[1] Disp., ii., 43.
[2] *Cf.* Bibliographical Note, p. ix.
[3] Portland MSS., iv., 126.
[4] Disp., i., 574.

the same area, since his own operations on the Moselle would prevent the French detaching to Alsace any of the sixty thousand men whom they had concentrated in Lorraine to connect Marsin in Alsace with Villeroi's army in the Netherlands. He was glad to find as his immediate opponent Villars, "said to be the right hand and almost sole dependence of Louis XIV.,"[1] with whom he was anxious to try conclusions. Success against Villars would be laurels well worth winning.

Arriving at The Hague on April 3rd/14th after a perilous voyage, his yacht having "fallen in among the sand," Marlborough was confronted with the usual crop of obstructions and deficiencies. Before leaving The Hague in December he had pressed the States General to prepare magazines on the Meuse and Moselle, and the troops had been warned to be ready to quit their winter quarters in the middle of April.[2] But not even the triumphant fashion in which Marlborough had vindicated the soundness of his strategy had cured the Dutch of their lack of confidence. In great anxiety as always for their own frontiers they insisted on retaining for defensive operations on the Meuse 90 squadrons and 50 battalions, leaving only 80 of the former and 60 of the latter available for the Moselle. Moreover, the magazines which should have been full to overflowing were half empty. Cranstoun writes[3]:

> For this design the States had engaged to have a magazine both of meal for bread for the army and of hay and oats

[1] Lediard, i., p. 480.
[2] Disp., i., 578, 604.
[3] Portland MSS., iv., 186.

at Treves sufficient to supply our whole army, when joined, for four or five weeks, because it was foreseen that this being a mountainous bare country there could not be forage in the fields so early as to supply us. It is said the States really gave their orders for furnishing the magazines but the commissary employed there in chief to do it has either been in correspondence with France and treacherously neglected it, or else has spent the money and could not do it, so the magazines fall mightily short of what is necessary and the commissary for fear of punishment is deserted to the enemy.

But this was not the only deficiency. Kane says that "the Germans being now freed from the Bavarian war were backward in sending their quotas into the field." However this may have been the contingents certainly were not up to time. On May 10th, 7000 men from the Palatinate who had been promised for April were still eighteen days' march away[1] and a little earlier Marlborough had written to Lord Raby at Berlin of "the straits we are in for want of the Prussian troops," bidding him point out to the King the failure to perform his undertakings clearly though "in the softest terms you can." Even in his disappointment as a general he did not forget to be diplomatic. Similarly the Rhenish Electors had promised "a sufficient number of horses for drawing the artillery" but now declared it beyond their power to find so many in the Rhineland (Cranstoun). To complicate matters further the Emperor had died on April 24th/May 5th, and although his son and successor, Joseph, was decidedly his superior in capacity and was even more zealous in the Allied cause,

[1] Disp., ii., 36.

Leopold's death could not fail for the moment to distract the attention of the Court of Vienna from the prosecution of the war. However, the British contingent, which had reached Maastricht on May 2nd/13th, set out for Treves two days later, while Marlborough himself pushing on ahead visited Louis of Baden at Rastatt. Not much satisfaction was to be got out of the Prince. He was full of complaints and obstructions. he had no waggons and no artillery, the Imperial troops who should have been with him were still in Bavaria; he himself was suffering from an old wound and must visit the baths at Schlangenbad. But perhaps Blackader was nearest the truth when he wrote, "You know Prince Louis is not thought rash of attacking." In the end he could only be induced to promise to join Marlborough with twenty-eight squadrons and twelve battalions and even this contingent could not possibly arrive on the Moselle for three weeks.

Marlborough was back at Triersweiler on May 15th/26th just as the leading echelons of his army arrived, but he was sadly short of the eighty thousand troops he had hoped to concentrate. "We want," he wrote on May 16th/27th, "a third of our foot and half our horse, which makes it impossible for me as yet to march." This inaction was the more galling because he knew he was "losing the best chance in the world for want of troops who ought to have been here long ago."[1] The advantage of surprise was slipping away. Time had been given to the French to reinforce Villars and to that Marshal to take up an extremely strong defensive position near Sierck, covering the country between the Saar

[1] Disp., ii., 60.

and the Moselle. The only comfort Marlborough could extract from the situation was that since Villars had been reinforced he might be more ready to fight and accordingly the Duke set his troops in motion on May 22nd/June 2nd. Starting at 2 A.M. the Allies after a difficult march of some eighteen miles, in which the left column had to negotiate the defile of Taveren, "a narrow pass two leagues in length," arrived before Villars's position on the heights of Sierck late that afternoon. The move quite surprised the French, whose outposts fell back hastily after some sharp skirmishing in which the Allies captured a couple of hundred prisoners, but, much to Marlborough's disappointment, Villars proved in no mood to fight. He "had an opportunity of fighting, if he had thought fit, with the advantage in numbers, but chose rather to stay in camp and strengthen himself there."[2] A frontal attack was out of the question for Villars's position was already, as Cranstoun puts it, "prodigious strong": the Moselle on its left and impenetrable woods on its right secured its flanks and precluded any turning movement, so while Villars continued to strengthen his entrenchments the opposing forces did nothing but "lie and look at each other" (Cranstoun).

Such inactivity was extremely distasteful to Marlborough but though a battle was "the thing we most want in the world"[3] he was not going to be betrayed into a headlong attack on so formidable a position. He had not abandoned hope of the arrival of the various belated contingents or even of Louis of Baden. Four

[1] Parker, p. 119

[2] *Cf.* Bath MSS., i, 70.

[3] Disp., ii., 66.

thousand Wurtembergers joined shortly after Marlborough took post opposite the French position and 7000 Palatiners arrived on May 25th/June 5th, making his total force 94 squadrons and 83 battalions[1] but on May 28th/June 8th it was reported that Louis of Baden's troops could not arrive for another ten days. It was possibly some consolation to hear that the Margrave himself had departed to Schlangenbad but these delays allowed Villars to draw reinforcements from Alsace and the country was becoming denuded of forage and provisions.[2] By advancing through the Taveren defile Marlborough had gained a position which made it impossible for the French to prevent him besieging Saarlouis except by fighting, but the continued failure of the German princes to provide transport delayed the opening of the siege. But, though impatient of his Allies' delays which had sacrificed the advantages his promptitude had gained, Marlborough would have carried through his scheme had not bad news come from the Netherlands. Villeroi had suddenly left his lines on May 10th/21st and had invested Hay. That petty fortress fell on May 30th/June 10th, whereupon the French, pushing on to Liège, opened trenches against the citadel (June 5th/16th). Auverquerque, whose field-force numbered under half Villeroi's, had no option but to fall back upon Maastricht. In the United Provinces commotion and alarm reigned, and such was the panic in Holland that Marlborough wrote to Eugene, "I am apprehensive lest the States should adopt resolutions that will mar our designs on this side." The motive of Villars's inactiv-

[1] Portland MSS. iv., 157. [2] Disp., ii., 73.

ity was now clear, "his whole aim" was "to give time to the Maréchal de Villeroi to act on the Meuse."

Marlborough was equal to the emergency. Detailing the Westphalian and Palatine contingents to cover Treves and the Prussians, who had just made a belated arrival, and the Würtembergers to reinforce Louis of Baden[2] he resolved to move to the Meuse with the rest of his forces. The task was formidable enough. The country to be crossed, modern Luxemburg and the Ardennes, was rugged and inhospitable, roads were few and bad, supplies deficient Moreover, to slip away unperceived from in front of Villars was not too easy. The long and difficult Taveren defile had to be traversed, and to be attacked in rear when the main body was committed to the passage would have been a nasty predicament. Accordingly the move was delayed until after dark on June 6th/17th. Tattoo was beaten as usual and then the troops started with all possible precautions for silence and secrecy. Marching hard all night they contrived by great exertions to execute their difficult task unperceived.[3] Villars himself has to admit[4] the success with which the move was concealed.

The Taveren defile safely negotiated Marlborough's troops turned North Westward from Consaarbrück (June 7th/18th), moving in three columns. He himself pushed on ahead with the cavalry. Elaborate care was taken to expedite the march by reducing the amount the troops had to carry and by leaving the sick behind in the villages on the route, and the journey was

[1] Disp., ii., 87; *cf.* 124.
[2] Disp., ii., 112 and 155.
[3] Parker, p. 119; *cf.* Disp., ii., 119 and 123.
[4] *Memoires*, lxx., p. 185.

accomplished in half the time taken in moving from Maastricht to the Moselle. By June 14th/25th all three columns concentrated at Duren and two days later Marlborough reached Maastricht. Already at Duren he had heard Liège was safe. The mere rumour of Marlborough's coming had sent Villeroi flying back behind the shelter of the French defensive lines.[1] These ran from the Meuse just below Namur to the Mehaigne, just East of Ramillies, thence down the Little Gheete to the Demer, along that river to Aerschoot, and so across by Lierre to Antwerp. Hearing that the French were in full retreat Marlborough abandoned the attempt to close with them; his horses had already done twenty leagues in two days and there was no object in pressing the troops if there was no chance of battle. They had had a good deal to endure as it was. Blackader writes of fatiguing marches all day long under a scorching sun, so that "many fell by with weariness and some died."

Within a fortnight of quitting Sierck, Marlborough by a junction with Auverquerque at Haneff (June 21st/July 2nd) found himself at the head of 168 squadrons and 104 battalions. He had hoped when he left the Moselle to return thither "when we have put our friends on the Meuse at ease" and to resume the operations suspended to parry Villeroi's thrust, and that by that time "the Germans might be in readiness to assist us."

[1] According to De la Colonie the French had accomplished all they desired by drawing Marlborough off from the Moselle: they preferred to see him in Flanders "where the country was covered by a chain of fortified towns suitable to ward off reverses, an advantage wanting on the Moselle" (pp. 293–294). This may be admitted but it is a testimony to the soundness of his original plan.

However, by the time he had retaken Huy (June 30th/July 11th) and could contemplate moving back to the Moselle any big success in that quarter had become highly unlikely. On the approach of a small French detachment the Palatinate General d'Aubach, who had been left to cover Treves, had retired precipitately downstream, abandoning to the enemy not only Treves but all the supplies so painfully collected there. This "quite unaccountable behaviour"[1] put any resumption of Marlborough's Moselle schemes out of the question; indeed it was now expedient to strike some telling blow without much delay, for Villars, if he had failed to hinder Marlborough's move to the Meuse, had been left free to reinforce Marsin in Alsace and was moving against the Army of the Empire. Direct assistance by a move to Alsace Marlborough could not give to his colleague, but the indirect assistance of a success over Villeroi might suffice and to the problem of piercing the formidable lines which covered the South-Eastern Netherlands Marlborough had now to address himself.

The French lines were a fine specimen of the engineer's art. Natural obstacles had been turned to good use in their construction and the force available to defend them was approximately equal to that at Marlborough's disposal. A direct attack on so formidable a position, except at a point where the lines were only weakly held, would have been condemned by contemporary military opinion as almost inviting defeat, and through Marlborough did not approach such fortified positions with the almost superstitious respect with which a Louis of Baden regarded them, in him daring

[1] Disp., ii., 139.

never degenerated into rashness. But without defenders the most formidable lines were no obstacle and Villeroi's seventy thousand men were not enough to be in strength everywhere along eighty miles of line. Marlborough's first problem was to select the suitable point to attack, next to distract the enemy's attention from the spot selected. But the most formidable obstacle to any surprise of the lines was to obtain Dutch consent to the venture. "You cannot believe," wrote Orkney to his brother,[1] "how much it was opposed by the Dutch." However, Marlborough finally secured their assent by promising not to press the attack if he found the lines well guarded, whereupon the Dutch agreed to carry out the feint which was to distract Villeroi from the real point of attack.

During the siege of Huy Auverquerque with the bulk of the Dutch had been posted on the Mehaigne to cover the operations, Marlborough himself lying ten miles to the North-West at Lens lez Bequines on the Upper Jaar. It had been ascertained that the portion of the lines just North-West of Landen, being considered specially strong, was negligently held.[2] To distract Villeroi from this quarter Auverquerque was ordered to cross the Mehaigne as though to attack the lines just North-East of Namur. This portion of the lines the defenders reckoned the weakest and Villeroi, alarmed by Auverquerque's advance (July 6th/17th), promptly concentrated at the threatened spot. As he did so Marlborough set his own troops in motion.

Immediately after tattoo, Marlborough's usual starting hour, his advanced guard, twenty-two battalions and

[1] E. H. R., xiv., 311.

[2] *Cf.* Disp., ii., 173.

twenty squadrons, pushed on ahead and two hours later the main body followed in two columns. The line of march took the troops North-North-West, leaving William III.'s battle-field of Landen to their left. The darkness of the night led the advanced guard to miss the way for a time and caused delay[1] but by daylight on July 7th/18th the points aimed at were reached. The French were completely surprised. "The too great security of the enemy," wrote Lumley, "made them negligent enough for us to possess with some advance detachments of foot two of their barriers." They had at this point no more than three battalions and a few squadrons of dragoons under Count d'Allegre and the critical positions were held by quite weak picquets.[2] These were promptly rushed and the lines carried, so that, as Hare says, "our men were over them before one thought they were at them." On the right Neerhespen was taken at once, in the centre the capture of the castle at Wange allowed bridges to be laid over the Little Gheete and the lines behind the river to be rushed, on the left three battalions stormed the village and bridge of Elixheim. Thus easily were mastered these formidable obstacles which Marlborough himself declared a small force might have maintained against greatly superior numbers.[3] Once again he had mystified, misled, and surprised his opponent. Acting on accurate information as to Villeroi's dispositions, Marlborough had deceived him by a feint against the quarter for which he felt most anxious and under cover

[1] *Cf.* Lumley to Ormonde. Hist. MSS. Comm. (App. I. to VIIth Report, p. 780).

[2] Parker, p. 122.

[3] Disp., ii., 177.

of that had struck hard and promptly against a point where the Franco-Bavarians fancied themselves secure. Nor had rapidity in execution been lacking to confirm cunning in planning: the night march had been well carried out, the troops had responded to all the calls upon them and despite the delays and loss of direction the surprise had been complete. But more remained to be done. It was about six o'clock that the lines were crossed and as yet only the advanced guard was up, while the arrival of reinforcements was likely to be delayed, partly by the check due to the way being lost, partly by the state of the passages, which were so bad that "hardly above one man could go over abreast though in some places one foot man and a horseman passed over together."[1] And if reinforcements tarried the advantage might be lost, for to the Southward large bodies of mounted men could be seen pushing forward with all possible haste upon Esemael. Behind these cavalry came infantry and guns and Marlborough sent off an express to Orkney, leading the infantry of the main body, to make what haste he could, while he got together Lumley's English cavalry who had just arrived in support of the advanced guard and, having pushed across the passage "without loss of time, though not without difficulty," had formed up "with all the expedition imaginable" (Lumley). Orkney was not slow to respond and his men stepping out well reached the bridges before they were "empty of the horse," and "scrambling strangely" over the very indifferent passages took post to support Lumley's squadrons. These were now forming line to their left flank, facing

[1] Orkney, p. 312.

South and confronting the enemy across the hollow way that runs from Esemael to Tirlemont, while as more of the Allies floundered across the pass they were pushed out to prolong the right of the new line and outflank the Franco-Bavarians. As he had reached the river Orkney had seen "two good lines of the enemy, very well formed, coming down upon our people, a line of foot following them," and as the Guards crossed he "saw the shock begin."

At the first charge Lumley's squadrons, going in sword in hand, broke and routed the Bavarian cuirassiers opposed to them but, pressing on in pursuit, came under effective fire from Bavarian infantry, whom the Elector had just brought up to the hollow way. This check, though only temporary, allowed the Bavarian horsemen to rally and renew the fight. Marlborough himself, riding on the flank of his squadrons with only a few attendants, was surrounded by the enemy and in great peril (Lumley). A French officer rode at him to cut him down, but fortunately struck with more fury than accuracy and, overbalancing, missed the Duke and fell off himself and while the Allied infantry came up to support their cavalry the latter rallied and came forward again. The fire of the Allied infantry, Orkney's Guards among them, drove the Bavarians from the hollow road[1] and so allowed the Allied cavalry to pass over this obstacle and renew the conflict. This time when Marlborough launched his squadrons at the Bavarian cuirassiers all went well. Though English, Hessian, and Hanoverian horse were "a good deal mixed and not in their proper place" (Orkney) "all attacked equally well." D'Allegre's own squadron was routed

[1] Ļediard, i., 497.

by the Royal Irish Dragoons and he himself captured by Lord John Hay of the Greys. There was now no rallying the Bavarian cuirassiers who fled in disorder, leaving their infantry comrades to fend for themselves. Moreover, though the enemy had reinforcements at hand the defeat of their advanced detachment had deprived them of any stomach for a fight. "Seeing most of our army getting over," writes Orkney, "they thought their best course was to retire which they did in pretty good order, not being very much pressed by us, for, as they retired, the ground grew higher and narrower." Indeed, though the Allied cavalry broke in upon a hollow square of infantry into which some of the hostile cavalry had retired, the bulk of the Bavarian infantry, ten battalions under M. de Caraman, distinguished themselves greatly by the steadiness with which they extricated themselves from the Allied horse who surrounded them.

For de Caraman's escape Marlborough was by some critics sharply blamed. He had called off his cavalry just as Caraman seemed at their mercy but as Cranstoun points out "there was rising ground before him (Caraman), to which he was retreating and the Duke really neither did nor indeed could at that time know how near the Elector and Marshal Villeroy were with their whole army and M. d'Overkerque's army were but marching up at a distance and were not yet entered into the lines." Such of Marlborough's own infantry as were up had been marching all night and were far from fresh, and it was only reasonable prudence to avoid the risk of being "brought into a general action with the enemy's whole army before the half of his force were

come within distance to join and second him."[1] But had Marlborough overruled the advice of the Dutch and pressed the pursuit a really great success might have been achieved. He had thrown his enemy into a confusion exceeding anything he could imagine.[2] Villeroi was in fact decamping with all possible speed and was in no mood to stand and fight. His one idea was to put the Dyle between himself and the enemy who had so completely outwitted him. Meanwhile Marlborough had sent on Ferguson's brigade to secure Tirlemont but, despite Orkney's pleadings for an advance, the Duke called a halt when his right was still more than five miles short of Louvain. It is related that the Elector of Bavaria was watching events from a hill near Tirlemont and that when he saw the Allied troops halt, which they did about ten o'clock, and "observed the first tents pitching," he "cried out three and four times 'Grace au Dieu, Grace au Ciel' and then without obliging them to keep any order bid every man make the best of his way to Louvain."[3] The Elector was evidently only too well pleased to rescue any of his army and it is some indication of the mighty things both friends and enemies had come to expect from the Duke that so considerable a success should not have contented them. Marlborough's critics declared that the halt at Tirlemont was made at

the only spot after coming so far he could have encamped in so as to lose all the fruits of his victory. Had he marched

[1] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 252.

[2] De la Colonie, the Bavarian, admits unequivocally how complete had been the surprise of the French (p. 295).

[3] Portland MSS., iv., 253.

forward to Louvain or but to Parc, which is but two hours further, he was master of Louvain and all the enemy's great magazines there and of Mechlin also, and so they could not hinder him to besiege both Lierre and Antwerp. Or . . . had he turned to the left and marched towards Jodoigne he necessarily forced the Elector and Villeroi either to fight him . . . or to retire towards Namur and so abandon Brussels with all Brabant and Flanders.

It is admitted that the troops, especially Auverquerque's, were much fatigued but the critic goes on:

those who know what soldiers are, know very well that upon occasions like this, where even the common soldier is sensible of the reason of what he is to do and especially in the joy of success, soldiers with little entreaty will even outdo themselves and march and fatigue double with cheerfulness what their officers would at another time compel them to.[1]

Not even Marlborough, however, could see all that was happening on the other side of the hill and he cannot be blamed for having been unaware of the confusion into which his successful manœuvre had thrown his adversaries. As it was he had gained a most substantial success and had any other general of the day accomplished as much his reputation would have been much enhanced. With quite trifling casualties a loss of several thousands had been inflicted on the enemy, including 1200–1400 prisoners, chiefly Bavarians, and twelve guns, a formidable line had been pierced with an ease which surprised everybody and was calculated to shake the confidence of those who relied on such elaborate systems of field fortification. De la Colonie avers

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 254.

that the Franco-Bavarians had calculated the lines would keep the Allies fully occupied there the greater part of the campaign and that the precautions taken seemed to have made their passage impossible. As Hare wrote (p. 202): "At the cost of half a dozen lives those lines were passed which it was thought would have cost at least as many thousand," and Orkney and Cranstoun agreed in ascribing the success solely to the Duke. The latter wrote: "The passing and forcing the French lines was a great action and wholly the Duke's own. The States opposed the very attempting of it as a rash and impracticable thing and so indeed did all their generals and perhaps most, if not all ours." Indeed the Duke only got the Dutch to agree on condition that their troops "were not to share the danger with him but only to second and follow him if he succeeded or help to make his retreat if he miscarried." Without any exaggeration not the least of Marlborough's difficulties lay in his own camp, and the greatness of his achievements is much enhanced by the conditions under which he had to work. When he had to "keep the design so private that he dared not offer to persuade the Deputies of the States with it but perfectly bubbled them into it" (Hare), it is astonishing that he accomplished anything. Certainly he himself was quite well pleased: Orkney wrote: "I believe this pleases him as much as Hogstet (*i.e.*, Blenheim) did." At any rate he himself wrote with much satisfaction of the conduct of his troops,[1] among whom Cadogan's (now 5th D. G.) and Lumley's (now 1st K. D. G.) Horse and the Scots Greys had specially distinguished

[1] Disp., ii., 173.

themselves. He adds "this action will certainly oblige the French to send more troops from Alsace so that if Prince Louis can be persuaded to act offensively he has a very fair opportunity."

Marlborough's hopes of turning his success to immediate advantage were destined to disappointment. He pushed forward next day (July 8th/19th) to the Dyle and though Dutch delays prevented him from reaching the river in time to catch more than a weak rear-guard on the near side, he was not too late to fall on that rear-guard and to capture 1500 prisoners.[1] But when he would have proceeded to force the passage which "promised as well as possible," since the "enemy were in panic terror of us, outwearied, dispirited, in confusion, the avenues and passages of the river yet unfortified";[2] the Dutch would not consent and, heavy rains setting in, operations were perforce postponed for some ten days."[3]

At this juncture the Franco-Bavarians lay along the Dyle from the Yssche on their right almost to the Demer on their left, Louvain being the centre of their line. Between them and the Allies ran the Dyle, "a deep still river with marshy ground on each side of it" (Kane), the Allies being concentrated more to the North, so that their left was about opposite the French centre. It was on capturing Louvain that Marlborough's aims were now set. He wrote to Portland on July 16th/27th:

Our army is in great heart but you know this country is such that it is very hard to force an enemy to fight when he

[1] Disp., ii., 183. [2] Portland MSS., iv., 253.
[3] Orkney, p. 314, *cf* Disp., ii., 187.

has no mind to it. My thoughts at present are very much employed to be master of Louvain, it being a very proper place to have our magazine for bread, for as yet we are forced to have it from Liège which is very hazardous, the enemy having a great garrison at Namur.[1]

Strong as the French position was Marlborough was not deterred and on July 18th/29th, while feints and diversions distracted the enemy's attention from the intended point of attack, two strong detachments, one under Orkney, the other under a Dutchman, Heukelom, made for the passages at Corbeek and Neer Yssche, the intention being to cross the river on the French right, thereby threatening their communications with Mons. A night march brought the advanced guards to their destinations about three next morning. Once again the French were surprised. The passages were found but "slightly guarded, as the Duke had been informed."[2] Orkney, whose column included four British battalions, one of them being apparently the Cameronians,[3] laid his pontoons successfully shortly before sunrise and actually passed guns across, while his infantry waded through the marshes[4] and "beat some brigades of the French from their posts."[3] Heukelom further to the left was equally successful and when the main body came up about ten o'clock all was ready for their passage[5] and, as Hare says, "promised a glorious day." The Franco-Bavarians came hurrying up from Louvain, but too late to dispute the passage of the river, and seemed committed to a battle in an unfavour-

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 212.
[2] Hare, p. 202.
[3] Blackader, p. 258.
[4] *The Remembrance*, p. 367.
[5] Millner, p. 259.

able situation strategically and none too well posted tactically.

The main bodies were merely waiting the order to advance when the Dutch generals intervened and declined flatly to agree to the prosecution of the attempt. Possibly, as Hare suggests (p. 202), "some who owed the Duke an ill-turn for not having a share in the secret of the lines were resolved to disappoint this"; their obstruction was fatal to the enterprise. Though Orkney and Heukelom were gaining ground and the enemy in Blackader's words were "coming up straggglingly and hovering off at a distance" and "by their mien did not look as if they would stand to it," the advanced detachments had to be recalled, much to the indignation of Heukelom who saw himself robbed of a fine chance of acquiring distinction.[1] Covered by the Allies' artillery, which is reported to have inflicted "considerable mischief" on the enemy,[2] this difficult operation was successfully performed, the Franco-Bavarians showing no inclination to close with their enemy and Marlborough drew off to a camp between Meldert and Bossu. His troops were not a little irritated at this unsatisfactory result. Blackader writes that the whole army was "mighty keen and eager to be at the French" and "out of humour and uneasy when ordered to retire." "I observe," he continues, "that in all skirmishes between us and them it appears we are masters of them and could beat them as easy as a mastiff worries a cur dog, but we are, as it were, chained down and cannot get them soundly beat."

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 254, *cf.* Hare, p. 204. [2] Disp., ii., 195.

Even Marlborough's own imperturbable temper was hardly proof against these vexations: he wrote to Shrewsbury "our army is laid up with a disease for which I see no cure, otherwise we might now have made a considerable progress in the enemy's country," and to Godolphin, "it is very mortifying to find much more obstruction from friends than from enemies."[1] He also addressed a temperate but strong protest to Heinsius. He declared that while he himself was quite ready to stand aside, for his health was far from good, there must be a supreme commander and an end to "that perennial source of delay, quarrels and animosities, councils of war": as things stood these must be called on every occasion which "entirely destroys the secrecy and dispatch upon which all great undertakings depend." The problem of "unity of command" was not peculiar to 1917–1918. Meanwhile, undeterred by Dutch obstructiveness and his own ill-health, Marlborough was planning a fresh attempt to bring his enemy to battle. As Hare wrote, "the Duke thinks hard for another opportunity and labours indefatigably but to what purpose, if when we come to execution, we have an ally that will hazard nothing?"

The Duke was specially anxious to lose no time because a strong reinforcement from the Rhine was known to be on its way to Villeroi.[2] On August 4th/15th therefore Marlborough moved to his left, intending to cross the upper Dyle and place himself between Brussels and the French frontier, thereby threatening Villeroi's communications by the Charleroi-Brussels road. With great trouble he had contrived to collect

[1] Disp., ii., 208.

[2] *Cf.* Disp., ii., 217.

"ten day's bread to enable us to make the march."[1] On August 5th/16th the Dyle was crossed at Genappe and next day the advance was continued to the borders of the Forest of Soignies. So far all promised well the weather had been good, the ground was dry, and the precautions which Marlborough had as usual taken to conceal his movement had given him a good start. Between him and Brussels the only obstacle was the Yssche which flows diagonally from South-West to North-East at the back of the Forest of Soignies. Behind this the French were hastily taking post, but though the obstacle was formidable enough, the river banks being steep with four villages covering the centre,[2] they were far from being solidly established. The position behind the Yssche was certainly no more formidable than that behind the Nebel, and as Marlborough afterwards wrote to Godolphin "the affair would have been a bit serious and would have cost us some casualties but there was every reason to suppose we should have had a decisive victory."[3]

Well before daybreak on August 7th/18th Charles Churchill started the move with twenty battalions and as many squadrons. This column moving to the left across the little river Hulpe, pushed Northward through the forest, the design being that it should wait till the main action had begun and then assail the enemy in flank and rear.[4] Meanwhile the main body, keeping to the right, advanced against the front of the French position. They passed the forest with unexpected ease

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 230.
[2] R. Pope in Coke MSS., iii., 62.
[3] Disp., ii., 225.
[4] Blackader, p. 262, *cf.* Hare, p. 204.

and debouching into the plain beyond began deploying into order of battle while Marlborough himself and his staff pushed forward to reconnoitre the passages of the river. The enemy were seen to be "in the greatest confusion, perpetually changing their motions this way and that, and not knowing what to stick to, and in many places they appeared very thin, so that had they been attacked, it is impossible to think they could have maintained them all."[1] Meanwhile Churchill's column had by ten o'clock gained a position which threatened Villeroi's flank and promised to assist the attack of the main body very materially. Marlborough certainly was full of hopes. He had selected four points for the crossing and was only waiting for the guns to come up. But the guns were far behind. Slangenberg had taken upon himself to stop them and to let his own baggage precede them in the order of march[2] and, to crown this, when at last all was ready and the attack only waited for the consent of the Dutch it was "that beast Slangenberg," as Hare calls him, who interposed. "Speaking forwardly and harshly to the Duke,"[3] he "was very noisy and cried out that it was sacrificing the army and an impracticable enterprise." In vain old Auverquerque urged the Deputies to consent, he could not prevail with them against Slangenberg and his fellows: in vain Marlborough argued with them, using "all methods, sometimes fair words and sometimes hard words, and at last told them that if they neglected this opportunity they could never answer it to God or to their masters and that this would be the last

[1] Hare MSS.
[2] Parker, p. 126.
[3] Portland MSS., iv., 254.

time he should lead them to an enemy,"[1] the Deputies remained obdurate.

Once again therefore the Duke had the mortification of seeing a promising opportunity wasted. "I thought the victory so secure," he wrote,[2] "that I cannot forgive those that were the occasion of our not attacking." Angry and disheartened he ordered the troops back to the old position between Bossu and Meldert, where headquarters were re-established by August 19th/30th. All that could be attempted was the reduction of the petty fortress of Leuwe, which capitulated on August 26th/September 6th, and the levelling of the French lines from the Mehaigne to Tirlemont. This done the Duke crossed the Demer (September 8th/19th) and took post at Aerschot. He hoped also by continuing in the field to prevent the French detaching reinforcements to Villars on the Rhine.[3] But the States of Zealand were feeling apprehensive about the little fort of Sand Vliet, midway between Bergen and Antwerp, which served as headquarters to irregulars who harried the Dutch borders, and they besought Marlborough to reduce it. Somewhat reluctantly the Duke attacked and took it (October 18th/29th), only to find it quite unsuitable to hold. The fort therefore was demolished, but meanwhile the Duke's disapproval of the enterprise was more than justified, as the French profited by the Allied army's absence near Sand Vliet to attack and capture Diest.[4] Apart from this, however, the French remained quiescent, actually drawing upon Alsace for reinforcements as though not feeling secure. They

[1] Hare, p. 205.
[2] Portland MSS., iv., 230.
[3] *Ibid.*, iv., 249.
[4] *Ibid.*, iv., 265.

knew to what they had owed their escape on the Yssche and were quite contented to have avoided action: they were in no hurry to give Marlborough the chance of which his colleagues and insubordinate lieutenants had thwarted him. Their inactivity was some measure of the impression he had produced on his adversaries.

That Marlborough was bitterly disappointed with the upshot of the year's plannings and manœuvrings was but natural. It had been bad enough to have his promising and carefully thought out Moselle campaign ruined, but what had happened in the Netherlands was even more exasperating. The relations between the English and the Dutch were naturally distinctly strained. The Dutch complained of the Duke's rashness and of the secrecy he maintained as to his intentions, while by the British Slangenberg's indiscipline and impertinence were hotly resented and there was acrimonious controversy. Marlborough unburdened himself to Portland: "I must own I am very much dissatisfied, for as it is ordered by M. Slangenberg I have not the tenth part of the authority I had last year,"[1] and accordingly Lord Pembroke was sent out as a special envoy to induce the States-General to make some more satisfactory arrangement and to point out that unless this were done supplies would not be forthcoming.[2] Fortunately reasonable counsels prevailed at The Hague and Marlborough, finding the Dutch generals "for the most part so ashamed of what they had done that they would take any reasonable opportunity to redeem their credit,"[3] was anxious not to press the

[1] Portland MS., iv., 230.
[2] *Ibid.*, iv., 237
[3] *Ibid.*, ii., 190.

question of his authority.[1] Matters were further improved by the departure on the score of ill-health of Slangenberg, "a man of so uneasy and intractable a temper that he never yet could agree to any one equal to him or above him" (Cranstoun), and 1705 thus ended with some prospect that the obstructions and indiscipline which had marred its operations might be less influential in the coming year.

But the campaign of 1705 cannot be passed over by students of Marlborough's career. More than any other it brings into clear relief the difficulties which thwarted him. At a time when his position at home had been well-established by Blenheim, when he had not, as in later years, to ride with one eye on what was happening behind him in England, he had been as badly hampered by the Dutch Deputies as he had even in 1702 before he had proved his title to command. His plans for the Moselle campaign are a valuable example of his capacity to divine the weak spot in his enemies' position, though the soundness of his calculations was never put to the test. But the promptitude with which he hurried back to the Meuse to assist Auverquerque, the skill with which he planned and carried out the forcing of the lines of the Gheete, the success with which both on this occasion and in the subsequent attempts which Dutch interference ruined he out-manœuvred and surprised his enemy were masterly examples of generalship. Night marches present to any but well-trained and well-led troops a very difficult task and the frequency with which Marlborough's army used night marches to surprise their enemies testifies to good discipline and

[1] Disp., ii., 249.

staff-work. Villeroi and his colleague, the Elector, had no great reason to look on the campaign with satisfaction: they had escaped disaster, but they owed their escape largely to Marlborough's subordinates and the ease with which their lines had been pierced on July 6th/17th argued ill for the future.

As usual the cessation of active operations merely meant for Marlborough a change of occupation. Directly the troops went into winter-quarters he proceeded to The Hague, where he was successful in obtaining from the States-General "a more ample power and authority over their troops than he had before" (Cranstoun), although he could not but note the growth among the Dutch of a weariness of the war, engendered partly by the stoppage of trade with France, partly by jealousy of England's progress in the Mediterranean and the West Indies. However, the Duke's diplomacy put matters on a better footing and induced the States-General to assist the Emperor with a loan to be employed in increasing the Imperial forces in Italy, where the situation was becoming critical. Next Marlborough visited Düsseldorf where he persuaded the Elector Palatine to promise a reinforcement for Eugene in Italy. From Düsseldorf he journeyed by Frankfort to Ratisbon where he took boat to Vienna. At Frankfort he had an interview with Louis of Baden. The latter to Marlborough's surprise and pleasure[1] had achieved some minor successes, including the capture of Haguenau, which allowed him to secure winter-quarters West of the Rhine. With his usual tact Marlborough went out of his way to be extremely polite to Prince

[1] Disp., ii., 251.

Louis, though over and above the events of the spring he had reason enough for annoyance, for the Margrave had altogether failed to prevent Villars sending reinforcements to Flanders: however, he realized that the Margrave had "so much credit, especially in the Circles of Suabia and Franconia, that there was a necessity of bearing with what could not be remedied."[1] It was essential to the success of the venturesome project Marlborough was already contemplating, nothing less than the transfer of himself and a considerable force to Italy, that the Rhine should be secured, and to keep Louis of Baden in a good temper and in harmony with his allies was for this all-important. At the same time his main object in visiting Vienna was to "fix the operations of the next campaign so solemnly as that it may not be in the power of Prince Louis to alter it," for "if he governs it their campaign will not begin sooner than July," the French would be free to use their Rhine army as they would and "all would go wrong."[2]

Arrived at Vienna on November 1st/12th Marlborough found plenty to occupy him. Leopold's death involved negotiating a new treaty between the Emperor and the Maritime Powers, relations between Vienna and The Hague were far from cordial, those between Vienna and Berlin so decidedly strained that Frederick of Prussia had actually recalled his contingent from the Rhine.[3] But Marlborough's patience and persuasiveness worked wonders. He won from Joseph a promise to conciliate the Hungarian insurgents, and made him realize that to quarrel with the Dutch would only play

[1] Lediard, i., 524.
[2] Portland MSS., iv., 249.
[3] Disp., ii., 322.

into the hands of France; he even improved relations between Joseph and Frederick of Prussia who, true to the traditions of his family, was using the Emperor's necessities to demand new concessions. What made the visit more beneficial was that the Duke was able to establish satisfactory personal relations with the leading advisers of the new Emperor, Wratislaw, Zinzendorf, and the most influential of them, Salm. Advantage was also taken of Marlborough's presence at Vienna to invest him formally with Mindelheim, the principality which the Emperor Leopold had bestowed upon him as a reward for Blenheim. Mindelheim, now made an immediate fief of the Holy Roman Empire, was not far from Augsburg and its possession not only brought in the very acceptable sum of two thousand pounds a year but much improved Marlborough's position on the Continent by giving him the precedence and footing of a Prince of the Empire.

A fit of the gout delayed his departure from Vienna but by November 19th/30th he was at Berlin on the homeward way. Here as usual he had business to transact: he found King Frederick "much exasperated both against the court of Vienna and the States,"[1] complaining bitterly of the latter's failure to make the payments they had promised and of their neglect of his contingent, and at first most unwilling to provide eight thousand men for Italy. But Marlborough "had learned so perfectly to accommodate himself to that capricious prince's temper"[2] that he smoothed away the difficulties and could leave Berlin (November 25th/December 6th) in high feather at having obtained

[1] Disp., ii., 333.

[2] Ledlard, i., 527.

Frederick's agreement to all the treaties required. By Hanover he proceeded to The Hague, not even yet being quit of negotiations, and not till December 24th/January 4th could he inform Godolphin that the States-General had consented to send ten thousand of their auxiliaries to assist Eugene. Altogether if the Duke returned home dissatisfied with the results of the year's operations he had no reason for dissatisfaction with those of his subsequent diplomatic labours. If 1705 had been a disappointment 1706 promised ample compensation.

CHAPTER XII

RAMILLIES

THE ITALIAN PROJECT—ITS BREAKDOWN—VILLEROI ON THE OFFENSIVE—THE RAMILLIES BATTLE-FIELD—MARLBOROUGH'S PLAN—ORKNEY'S FEINT—THE DECISIVE STROKE—RESULTS OF VICTORY—SIEGES AND SURRENDERS—THE POLITICAL SITUATION—CLOSER ALLIANCE WITH THE WHIGS.

WHILE 1705 had brought Marlborough one disappointment after another, and in Italy Eugene's failure to unite with the Duke of Savoy had rendered the latter's position increasingly precarious, in the Spanish Peninsula the Allies had made most satisfactory progress. The gallant defence of Gibraltar against Marshal Tessé's besieging army during the winter of 1704–1705 had been successfully maintained until, in March, 1705, Admiral Leake caught the blockading vessels napping, sunk and dispersed them and forced the besiegers to withdraw. Sea-power had again asserted itself. On this success had followed the arrival of Peterborough's expedition from England, the dramatic capture of Barcelona (September 28th/October 9th, 1705), and the winning of Catalonia and Valencia for the Allied cause, and though the campaigns in the Peninsula absorbed almost as many British troops as Marlborough himself commanded[1] the French could not afford to leave unsupported their partisans in Spain

[1] Besides Peterborough's force there were several thousands of British under Lord Galway in Portugal.

and had to detach considerable forces to the Peninsula. Thus though the extension of hostilities to Catalonia diverted troops from the main theatre of war it seemed likely to justify itself by results, the more so because if Marlborough had his way the shores of the Mediterranean would become themselves the principal theatre of operations.

The project Marlborough was contemplating outdid in daring even the great march of 1704. The experience of 1705 had left the Duke almost despondent of success in the Flanders theatre where war had to be waged under so many restrictions. Any attempt at a direct attack on the enemy's lines, in any case a hazardous venture, was sure to be opposed and thwarted by the Dutch, and the lines became more easy to defend the more they were shortened, while if the French adhered to the defensive and refused to be brought to battle there seemed little chance of substantial success in Flanders. Marlborough was not the man to be contented with "approaching the enemy's lines to consume the forage," or other similar manœuvres which satisfied a Louis of Baden or a Villeroi; his aim was, as always, decisive victory. However, his 1705 experiences had warned him against depending on the Rhenish princes for transport or supplies or on Prince Louis for cordial co-operation, and it was further afield that his thoughts had travelled. His scheme was certainly daring, to transfer himself to Italy with the British cavalry and the Hessian and Hanoverian contingents, which, with this in view, he had left to winter on the Moselle (*cf.* Portland MSS. iv., 440). In the plains of Lombardy in conjunction with his colleague of 1704 Marl-

borough hoped for results comparable to those of the Blenheim campaign, and apparently among the objectives before him was included Toulon. With his grasp of maritime affairs and his appreciation of the certain harvest of a successful blow at the centre of French naval power it was at more than the mere rescue of the Duke of Savoy that he aimed, something more likely to be decisive even than the expulsion from Italy of the French and their partisans.

But the project, though welcomed by Eugene, was too bold for the other Allies. Even Godolphin jibbed —"I never could swallow so well the thoughts of your being so far out of reach and for so long a time," he wrote to Marlborough endeavouring to console him for its abandonment. The Dutch were most reluctant to agree and insisted that the British infantry at least should be left in the Netherlands for their protection. The King of Denmark objected to letting his contingent be employed beyond the Alps and even Hanoverians and Hessians made difficulties about serving so far afield as Lombardy. Moreover, for all the promises Marlborough had extracted from the German princes during his autumn tour, the preparations for the new campaign proved once again deplorably deficient. Conspicuous among the delinquents was Frederick of Prussia, who raised complaint after complaint, sent his troops to Wesel when they were wanted on the Upper Rhine, and declined to let them advance to the Allied rendezvous in the Netherlands unless all his claims were met. "The little zeal," Marlborough wrote bitterly to Godolphin, "that the King of Prussia and the King of Denmark and almost all the other princes show gives

me so dismal thoughts that I almost despair of success." And, as usual, Louis of Baden did not fail to contribute his share to wrecking Marlborough's projects. Before February was out Marlborough had been complaining that though the season was already well advanced he could get nothing out of Louis of Baden, and even a month later he had to draw that Prince's attention to the bad state of his troops and the absence of adequate preparations[1]; the contingents from Franconia, Würtemberg, Darmstadt, and Wurzburg had failed to appear and Prince Louis had only collected seven thousand men when Villars suddenly took the offensive, surprised Louis in his lines on the Motter (May 1st/12th), scattered his troops, took Haguenau, sent him hastily back across the Rhine, and threatened Landau. This disaster effectually dismissed the Italian project. The Dutch, though on the brink of consenting,[2] took fright and would hear none of it and Marlborough found himself committed to yet another campaign in Flanders. This prospect did not attract him. There was no reason to hope that it would be any easier to bring Villeroi to action than it had been in 1705, or even to dislodge him from behind the Dyle. It was something gained that the Dutch agreed to modify the instructions of the Deputies and curtail considerably their powers of interference, and that the British contingent was in improved condition. Against that Marlborough found the foreign auxiliaries less good than in 1705 and when, early in May, the army began to assemble near Tongres not only were the Prussians absent but the Hanoverians were tarrying and the

[1] Disp., ii., 431.

[2] Disp., ii., 495.

Danes were expected to refuse to fight unless their arrears were paid.

The British troops, who had left their winter quarters on April 27th/May 8th, joined the Dutch at Bilsen ten days later, the Danes being then two marches away. Marlborough had decided to push forward boldly directly the English arrived.[1] Villeroi was known to be concentrating near Louvain, and Marlborough's idea was a dash at Namur, the enemy's extreme right. He might succeed in surprising the fortress, more probably the news Namur was attacked would bring Villeroi out of the shelter of his lines and give the Duke the pitched battle he had been denied in 1705. His force only amounted to 130 squadrons and 75 battalions, of whom the British contingent came to 15 squadrons and 19 battalions,[2] but he had had enough of waiting for the Prussians and other belated reinforcements and trusted more to surprise and rapidity than to numbers.

Moving Westward from Bilsen by Borchloen, where bad weather forced him to halt for a day (May 10th/21st), Marlborough heard to his great satisfaction on May 11th/22nd that Villeroi and the Elector were also on the move: "forsaking their true interest and all the wise and prudent rules by which they usually walk"

[1] Disp., ii., 516.

[2] The cavalry regiments present were the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, and 7th D. G., and 2nd and 5th Dragoons, the infantry being the Grenadier Guards, 1st (two battalions), 3rd, 8th, 10th, 15th, 16th, 18th, 21st, 23rd, 24th, 26th, 28th, 29th, and 37th, with Evans's, Macartney's, and Stringer's regiments which were subsequently disbanded. These three, as also the 28th (1st Gloucestershire), 29th (1st Worcestershire), and four battalions of the Scots Brigade in the Dutch service, who were also present, had not been at Blenheim.

(Cranstoun) they were going to fight. They had united between Judoigne and Tirlemont, and were marching South. He decided to move round the upper waters of the Little Gheete to meet his enemy, hoping to anticipate the French on the ground between Ramillies and St. André. This was a position of some strength situated on the high ground in which rise the two Gheetes, the Dyle, and the Mehaigne, the latter flowing Eastward to join the Meuse, the others North to unite with the Demer. The ground immediately about their headwaters was marshy, with low ridges separating the different streams, but between Ramillies, where the Little Gheete rises, and the Mehaigne there is a ridge of higher and drier ground. This slopes down to the Eastward into the plain of Jandrincœuil and opens out Westward into that of St. André, in the middle of which is situated a mound, known as the Tomb of Ottomond, which was the highest spot in the neighbourhood. Behind (*i.e.*, West of) the Little Gheete lay the villages of Offuz and Autre Église, on the left bank of the Mehaigne due South of Ramillies was Tavières, with the hamlet of Franquinay a few hundred yards lower down the stream. The key to the position was the ridge between Tavières and Ramillies, but as Cadogan with Marlborough's advance-guard reached Mierdorp about 8 A.M. on May 12th/23rd he saw the French getting into position on this ground and had to report back to his commander that the enemy had forestalled him. By the time—about ten o'clock—that the Allied main body began to arrive their enemies were already established in two lines from Autre Église and Offuz on the left, past Ramillies and in front of the Tomb of

Ottomond, to the Mehaigne at Tavières. But they were at least out of their lines and offering battle; this was more than they had ventured in 1705. Marlborough asked for nothing more than the chance of a battle, even with the ground in the enemy's favour, and he rejoiced that Villeroi had confidence enough to risk one.

The tactical problem which confronted Marlborough when he rode forward to reconnoitre the hostile position resembled curiously that which he had faced at Blenheim. Villeroi's right rested scarcely less securely on the swampy valley of the little Mehaigne than Tallard's had on the broad-flowing Danube. Tavières and its advanced post at Franquinay opposed the same obstacles to a frontal attack against the right wing as the village of Blenheim had provided, while the troops holding Tavières and Ramillies could flank with their fire any advance against the cavalry massed on the intervening ridge just as the cross-fire from Blenheim and Unterglau had impeded the attack on Tallard's horsemen. Farther to the hostile left the Gheete and the marshes in which it rose constituted as serious an impediment to coming to grips with the enemy as the Nebel had presented to Eugene's wing, and any attempt to outflank the French left was as effectually put out of court as a similar move would have been in August, 1704, by the wooded hills from which the Nebel sprang. But there was one substantial difference. The Nebel had covered the whole Franco-Bavarian front the 2400 yards between Ramillies and Tavières were free from any such obstacle.

Marlborough's mind was quickly made up. He was

not of the school of generals who, though zealous for battle, were prone to manœuvre in face of the enemy once contact had been established. An enemy encountered in the open was an enemy to be attacked. Nor was he one to be paralyzed by mere obstacles however formidable in appearance. He saw at once that the swamps which made the French left hard to approach equally forbade a counter-stroke by that wing. Accordingly, provided that he demonstrated in that direction vigorously enough to conceal his real purpose and to prevent the enemy drawing troops thence to support their right and centre, at any rate until his main attack was properly launched, he could himself divert part of his right to other quarters. This would be the more easy because the French position was roughly concave in shape and, with the chord of the arc to traverse, the Allies could reach the decisive point sooner than their adversaries. Moreover, Tavières lay in advance of the main position and could only be supported by sacrificing advantages of ground. By attacking Ramillies and Tavières simultaneously with the advance of the main body of his cavalry between these villages, he would cover the flanks of the main attack: by demonstrating vigorously against the French left between Autre Église and Offuz he would prevent Villeroi reinforcing his right, while under cover of folds in the ground the reserves of the Allied right moved to the left to lend weight at the decisive spot. But the necessary deployments were bound to take time, not merely because in those days to form up for battle was always a slow process, but because the ground on which the Allies had to deploy was restricted and they were decidedly

cramped for space.[1] However, Marlborough pushed his guns to the front, placing them himself,[2] and under cover of their fire the confusion which had at first prevailed was gradually straightened out into order.

The French had placed the bulk of their cavalry, over one hundred squadrons, between Ramillies and Tavières, drawn up in three lines and interlined with their best infantry (Kane, p. 64). Ramillies itself had been hastily entrenched and was held by twenty battalions, while more infantry, drawn up in two lines, formed the centre and stretched away to Offuz, protected by the Gheete in front. On the left, reaching to Autre Église were yet more infantry in the front line supported by a second line of horse. In front of the main position a brigade of infantry held Tavières, and detachments of foot and dragoons were pushed further forward again to Franquinay. Villeroi's total force amounted to 130 squadrons and 76 battalions with 80 guns.[3] Marlborough's own force being almost exactly equal in horse and foot though in artillery he had a distinct advantage, having half as many guns again.[4] So early in the campaign units would be well up to establishment and sixty thousand apiece may be taken as the approximately correct strengths, at any rate in numbers there was "a pretty near equality if there had been any in the ground" (Orkney). To attack so strong a position without any superiority in force required some courage

[1] *Cf.* Orkney, E. H. R., xix., 315. [2] *Cf.* Millner, p. 171.

[3] *Cf.* Dispatches, ii., 527: *cf.* 549: other accounts (Kane and Parker) put the French infantry at 90 battalions while Orkney's figures are 128 squadrons and 74 battalions.

[4] *Cf.* Millner, p. 171.

and self-confidence on Marlborough's part but he had framed a plan which would give him superiority at the decisive point.

The lengthy process of deployment at last completed, somewhere about one o'clock, the Allies began their advance. On his right Marlborough had as usual the British contingent,[1] with the British were the Danes while the Germans and Dutch formed the centre and left. The actual attack began by the advance upon Franquinay of four Dutch battalions who soon dislodged the dismounted dragoons and infantry posted there. Pushing on against Tavières they found the resistance stiffen, and Villeroi sent down more dragoons and a couple of Bavarian battalions[2] to stay their progress. However, the Dutch were ably supported by the cavalry of the left wing who charged these reinforcements as they were advancing and sent them back in confusion. Profiting by this the Dutch stormed Tavières, and though its defenders maintained the struggle behind the village they were powerless to prevent the advance of the great mass of Allied cavalry who now came forward to the attack. Meanwhile on the other wing infantry, the red-coats of the British prominent among them, had moved forward as though to attack Autre Église. The sight was too much for Villeroi. Relying on the inaccessibility of his left he had posted there his least trustworthy battalions, but as he saw Orkney's red-coats pushing down to the Gheete the thought must have come to him that the Nebel had not stopped Cutts and these same battalions at Blenheim, and at the very outset of the battle he

[1] V. S., p. 283. [2] *Cf.* De la Colonie, p. 306.

found himself altering his dispositions, drawing on his centre to reinforce his left and on his right to fill the gap in the centre. He had no confidence in his own plan and was already playing into Marlborough's hands. The Duke had no intention of pressing the attack on the French left · all he wanted was to alarm and distract Villeroi and this was effectually accomplished. Orkney, however, undaunted by being informed that the passage of the Gheete was impossible, made the attempt and "after some difficulty" got over with ten or twelve battalions and pressed forward to attack Offuz.[1]

As Orkney advanced against Offuz the French "brought down a good part of their line" to oppose him, for his advance, if not checked, would have turned their left flank and imperilled their line of retreat.[2] But Orkney pressed on and the French were giving ground before him—the Guards had actually reached the village—when, much to his annoyance, he "had two aide-de-camps to me to come off, for the horse could not sustain me." Actually Lumley with the Scots Greys and 5th Dragoons and a squadron of his own regiment (K. D. G.) had managed to flounder across the brook and bog and were coming to Orkney's help, but the orders were positive and Orkney, much chagrined, had to fall back under a heavy fire from both infantry and guns: "indeed," he writes, "I

[1] Orkney's own account (*cf.* E. H. R., xix.) makes it clear that the usual version of the story which represented the British infantry as merely making a demonstration is inaccurate and that the Gheete was crossed at the very outset of the action Cranstoun (Portland MSS., iv., 310–312) confirms Orkney and this version is further confirmed by the claim of the French accounts that General de Guiche repulsed an attack on Autre Église (*cf.* Pelet, iv., 33–39), *cf.* Appendix C.

[2] Portland MSS., iv., 310.

think I never had more shot about my ears and I confess it vexed me to retire. However, we did it very well and in good order and whenever the French pressed upon us with the battalion of the Guards and my own [*i.e.*, the Royal Scots] I was always able to make them stand and retire." Back therefore Orkney came to the near side of the Gheete where Cadogan met him and explained that the horse were all needed for the main attack and so could not be spared to sustain him had he gone on. But even so Orkney and his battalions had done well; their success in disengaging and effecting their retreat speaks well for their discipline and steadiness, their advance had kept the French left occupied and meanwhile the action was developing well elsewhere.

The way paved for him by the capture of Tavières and his right flank covered by the advance, well supported by the Allied artillery,[1] of twelve battalions under General Schultz against Ramillies, Auverquerque had about 2.30 P.M. led to the attack the Allied cavalry, whose advance De la Colonie describes as "in four dense lines like solid walls." Pressing up the slopes they charged and routed the first line of Franco-Bavarian cavalry who were formed with too large intervals between the squadrons. However, the infantry interlined among the cavalry intervened to check the pursuit and then Auverquerque saw charging down on him the Gardes du Corps, the Mousquetaires, and all the other famous regiments of the Maison. They did not this time repeat their mistake of Blenheim and receive the attack with pistol fire at the halt, but charged. Before their onset Auverquerque and his Dutchmen were swept

[1] *Cf.* Pelet, vi., 36.

back. At the critical moment Auverquerque's right was succoured by Marlborough who, as Cranstoun says, "seeing that things went pretty well elsewhere stuck by the weak part to make it up by his presence" and brought up a timely reinforcement of cavalry. Simultaneously the Danish horse from the right wing prolonged Auverquerque's left and prevented it from being outflanked. Thus the balance was re-established, though the contest continued to be evenly disputed, both cavalries charging each other "with varying success and the foot on both sides often stopping the squadrons in their career."[1] Meanwhile Schultz's infantry, among them two British battalions, Churchill's and Mordaunt's,[2] were slowly gaining ground in a savage fight with the defenders of Ramillies and the Allied cavalry had no interference from that quarter to fear. To decide the struggle raging between Ramillies and the Mehaigne both commanders turned simultaneously to their other wing, but whereas Marlborough had gone into the battle meaning to draw on his right to reinforce his left, with Villeroi this was an afterthought and the shorter distance the Allies had to travel told in their favour. Orkney's battalions were by now lined up on their original side of the Gheete and the French, not venturing on a counter-stroke, were watching them from across the swamps but the cavalry of the Allied right were moving, covered from sight of their enemies by the folds of the ground, to Auverquerque's assistance. As these squadrons came up Marlborough threw them into the mêlée at a point

[1] Kane, p. 66.

[2] The 3rd (Buffs) and 21st (Royal Scots Fusiliers).

where the Dutch were in disorder and the French pressing on in pursuit. In the turmoil and confusion he had been in the gravest peril. Swept along with the crowd he was dishorsed in leaping a ditch and was ridden over. Luckily General Murray who was near at hand with two Swiss battalions in the Dutch service led up his men to the rescue and the Duke's aide-de-camp, Captain Molesworth, jumping off his own horse brought it up for him to mount. As the Duke sprang to the saddle a cannon-ball carried off the head of his equerry, Colonel Bringfield, who had been holding his stirrup for him, but once again Marlborough's personal good fortune held; the Swiss infantry beat off the French horse who came charging in on them and the Duke escaped unscathed. But the reinforcements he had brought up—among them some of the British horse—had turned the scale. The Danish horse working round wide on the Allied left gained the plain that stretched Westward towards the Tomb of Ottomond, thereby outflanking the French cavalry and at last these began to waver. Kane describes how the day went gradually against them: "the French fire which on all first onsets seems so furious was now spent, their light horse took to flight and could not be brought to rally," the foot who had been interlined with their horse found themselves "left in the lurch to be cut to pieces," which is "generally the fate of foot that are interlined with horse when once they are routed and especially when the other foot are up with them." The fight for Ramillies, too, though stubbornly contested, had been decided by the Scots battalions in the Dutch service whom the Duke of Argyle brought up to support Schultz. The Buffs

and the Scots Fusiliers are said to have thrust three whole battalions into the morass, and the Fusiliers drove the regiment of Picardie out of Ramillies into the arms of Borthwick's regiment of the Scots Brigade who fell on them and completed their discomfiture.[1] As the defenders came streaming out of Ramillies they saw their cavalry comrades already in flight and in upon them came charging the victorious Allied squadrons. Fortunately for the French the Allies themselves were in some disorder, and while they were endeavouring to re-form before taking up the pursuit Villeroi profited by the pause to bring up some of the cavalry from his left, hitherto mere spectators of their comrades' disaster, to cover the retreat.

By this time, rather after five o'clock, the infantry of the Allied right was active again. Part of them had started off to support the left after Orkney had withdrawn behind the Gheete (*cf.* Cranstoun) but these troops had not reached Ramillies when it fell and the French gave way, so were too far off to be of service.[2] However, the British cavalry with Lord John Hay and his Scots Greys well to the fore pressed on to join in the pursuit, and Schultz's battalions who had carried Ramillies turned to their right against Offuz and forced the French infantry there to go. In vain the Bavarian and Spanish Horse Guards were thrown into the fight by the Elector; Wood charged them promptly with his own regiment (3rd D. G.) and the Carabineers and sent them flying headlong. This was the signal for the retreat to become a disorderly rout. Two battalions of the Regiment du Roi were overtaken by the Greys who

[1] *The Remembrance*, p. 378. [2] *Cf.* Blackader, p. 276.

"broke in" "à la hussarde sword in hand and at a gallop" (Cranstoun), killing or taking nearly all. However, some other battalions fared better, taking advantage of hedges and ditches to pour volleys into the cavalry when the latter could not come at them, while the Allied infantry far to the rear were unable to intervene. Orkney and his men did their utmost to overtake the fugitives, but in vain; delayed by having to cross the morass they could not catch up. But, despite Cranstoun's complaints of what Orkney could have done if allowed to press home his original attack, the victory was decisive enough. The French had fought well to the last but their losses had been heavy and when they did give way they were allowed no chance of rallying. Marlborough had won his battle without having to employ his whole force and among the fresh troops in hand when the action closed were most of the British cavalry.

All through the night the pursuit was remorselessly urged. If Marlborough's failure to pursue after the passage of the lines of Tirlemont had been bitterly criticized no such complaints could be raised against the following up of his success at Ramillies That pursuit may well rank among the great pursuits of history, with Napoleon's after Jena or Blucher's after Waterloo. Cut off from retreating South-Westward towards Charleroi or Mons by the turning movement of the Danish horse, the French were hounded North-West along the roads towards Brussels and Louvain. With the British cavalry at their heels to re-form was impossible. Guns, baggage, and stragglers strewed the roads and before long their loss in prisoners alone

exceeded the total Allied casualties in the battle. These had amounted to little over four thousand as against fifteen thousand French, a disproportion which might seem incredible had it not been for the vigour with which the pursuit was urged and for the massacre of the unfortunate infantry interlined among the cavalry of Villeroi's right. Among the Allies the British had come off quite lightly, though the stubborn fight for Ramillies had cost the Buffs and Scots Fusiliers dear, and Borthwick's regiment of the Scots Brigade had lost its colonel and had many other casualties.[1] But if the British had fared better than at Blenheim they had done well, and Auverquerque in particular was loud in their praise.

Ramillies is distinguished among Marlborough's quartette of pitched battles because he fought it without Eugene's assistance. There can be no question therefore but that the credit is Marlborough's alone. Villeroi's position had been strong, his troops came into action fresh from their winter-quarters, and imbued with "a firm resolution to attack" (Orkney), and they had ample time to make their dispositions before the Allied attack began. Yet they were driven in headlong flight from ground which favoured them by a force certainly not superior in numbers and they were unable to rally for days after the battle. De la Colonie indeed writes that it was two months before the army could again be mobilized on a campaigning footing. Such a defeat was due largely to the skill with which Marlborough turned to account even the strong points of the French position. From the start

[1] Cf. *The Remembrance.*

he established an ascendency over Villeroi's mind, caused him at the very outset "to break their dispositions in the centre where they had placed their great dependence of the success of the battle,"[1] and having once upset his adversary's plans never gave him time to recover. The careful arrangements for ensuring the success of the main attack by securing its flanks against intervention suggest that Marlborough had learnt lessons from his own victory at Blenheim, and his rejection of the temptation offered by Orkney's unexpected success in crossing the marches and storming Offuz and his unswerving adherence to his original determination to make his main attack on the left are proofs of his coolness and tenacity. He was not to be seduced into the error of "order, counter-order, disorder," even by such an opening. Had he had ample reserves no man would have been quicker to turn Orkney's advance to account: but there were none to spare, every man was wanted to help Auverquerque, and it was the timely arrival of the squadrons from the right which provided the additional weight which turned the scale in Marlborough's favour at the decisive point between Ottomond's Tomb and Ramillies. Villeroi, however, does not show to advantage. With the better position, on ground which he knew and had actually reconnoitred beforehand,[2] he had allowed Marlborough to grasp the initiative from the first and had betrayed a want of confidence in his own dispositions. Barely had he completed them before he was altering them uneasily. Deceived by the vigour of Orkney's attack against his left he had been unable

[1] Kane, p. 65.

[2] *Cf.* Parker, p. 130.

to find for his right the succours which might have made head against Auverquerque and the reinforcements Marlborough threw in. He had left his lines because he believed that the war was turning in favour of France, confident in his army, "one of the finest ever seen,"[1] he had even contemplated attacking: he had been outgeneralled, routed, discredited.

The vigour of the pursuit was wonderfully maintained. While the British cavalry were pressing hard upon the fugitives Marlborough's main body after marching all night halted about daybreak near Meldert, fifteen miles from the battle-field, and next day (May 14th/25th) entered Louvain. Here Villeroi had hoped to rally his men behind the Dyle, but the pursuit had been too close to allow of that or of a stand at Vilvorde, the next point where this was attempted. Villeroi had to abandon Brussels, to recross the Dender (May 15th/26th) and Scheldt (May 16th/27th): indeed as Kane says, "they never looked behind them till they got to Lille." Here something of a rally was made, battalions cut to pieces at Ramillies were replaced by others drawn from places evacuated in Brabant and Western Flanders, while the news that Marsin had arrived from the Moselle and was preparing Ath and Mons and Charleroi for defence justified hopes of an improvement. But meantime Marlborough had accomplished much. Knowledge of Marsin's approach had added an incentive to the vigour of his pursuit and made him anxious to make the utmost of his victory before that general could intervene, and his success had been great. Moving promptly upon Brussels he entered the city on May

[1] De la Colonie, pp. 303–304.

17th/28th, his mere appearance outside its walls having proved enough to make the townsfolk declare for Charles III. This example was followed by Malines and by Alost, the mere laying of a bridge over the Scheldt at Gavre (May 19th/30th) secured the evacuation of Ghent and Bruges, Oudenarde capitulated (May 22nd/June 2nd) although the Allies had no guns available for a siege and Dendermonde would have followed suit had not the Governor managed to let out the waters and surround the town with inundations. Blackader writes in astonishment at the French collapse: "towns that we thought would have endured a long siege are yielding without a stroke."

Marlborough had written in great satisfaction to Godolphin: "we have now the whole summer before us" (May 27th/June 7th), and he was counting on this to enable him to reap fruits exceeding even the harvest of Blenheim. The precipitate retreat of the French from Ghent and Bruges had isolated Antwerp and the reduction of that important city was his next task. Antwerp he calculated would detain him at least a month, but he was destined to be pleasantly disappointed. Barely had he crossed the Scheldt and taken post near Arseele to cover the siege when quarrels between the French and Walloon elements in the garrison led to Antwerp opening its gates on June 6th/17th, the French being given a safe conduct to Landrecies, the Walloons promptly taking service with Charles III.

Antwerp thus speedily disposed of the next problem was Ostend. Its reduction would allow him to open a shorter line of communications with England but was likely to be difficult for, if the fortifications were in bad

repair, watercourses and inundations made the place hard to approach and the French at Furnes and Nieuport controlled the sluices. Moreover, pressure was being put on Marlborough from England to tackle Dunkirk, that perpetual thorn in the side of English trade, whose capture would specially gratify the commercial community. Marlborough, however, wrote to Godolphin that until Ypres and Ostend were taken nothing could be done against Dunkirk, fully though he recognized "the mischief that place does to England." Moreover he deprecated the proposal that England should hold permanently any place in the Netherlands as certain to "create a jealousy" both at home and abroad. He was also much concerned with a long projected descent on the French coast. "It were to be wished our descent was in readiness to proceed," he wrote to Harley on May 22nd/June 3rd, "it would at this juncture have a very great effect." A hurried visit to The Hague to induce the Dutch to co-operate in this descent and to draw more troops out of their garrisons, where indeed not even the most timorous Dutchmen could maintain that they were needed now, met with fair success, and meanwhile he wrote to Prince Salm at Vienna begging that Louis of Baden, who already much outnumbered his opponents, should be urged to profit by Marsin's departure for the Netherlands to take the offensive. Activity on the Upper Rhine, he wrote, would assist affairs in Italy where Eugene had his hands full in the effort to relieve the hard-pressed Duke of Savoy and raise the siege of Turin.[1] Moreover it was reported that besides Marsin's 14 squadrons and 18 battalions

[1] Disp., ii., 560; *cf.* 569.

Villars had orders to detach another 40 squadrons and 30 battalions to the Netherlands, which would leave Prince Louis free "to act as he pleases" with every prospect of success.

By June 6th/17th the troops for the siege started for Ostend, Marlborough following two days later with one hundred squadrons and fifty battalions and taking post at Roulers as covering force. The French had received some reinforcements and took post at Courtrai, but, as Cranstoun wrote, "with all that comes to them from the Rhine" they could not "bring together any body of foot to face us anywhere"; all that was to be feared was that "whilst we have one body besieging and another covering here in Flanders" the French might "attempt an irruption into Brabant" where the Allies had but few troops. But their experiences at Ramillies proved sufficient to deter the French from anything so venturesome; at one moment there was an alarm that the Elector of Bavaria was contemplating a raid on Brussels from Mons and Marlborough sent his trusted lieutenant Cadogan to reconnoitre the roads and bridges in readiness for a sudden call to move Eastward. However, the alarm proved false. Auverquerque who had been detached to master the pass at Plassendael and the forts along the coast as far as Nieuport "for the greater security of the besiegers"[1] was unsuccessful, for the French flooded the country; but the operations against Ostend went steadily forward. Trenches had been begun on June 17th/28th, and on June 22nd/July 3rd the bombardment began, a squadron of nine ships of the line and many smaller craft under Sir Stafford

[1] *Cf.* Stair, *Annals*, i., 227.

Fairborne, for whose co-operation Marlborough had written many insistent letters, lending most useful assistance. There was dissension in the garrison between the French and the Walloons and Marlborough found that his policy of conciliating the Walloons was bearing good fruit. On June 25th/July 6th the counterscarp was stormed, whereupon the garrison asked for terms. Three days later they marched out under a promise not to serve for six months and Ostend was in the Allies' hands after little over three weeks' siege, a rapid triumph which the exultant Brodrick compares with the three years of Spinola's leaguer.

But there was no rest for the Allies. Within three days the army was moving against Menin, and though there was some trouble over bringing up guns and supplies from Ghent, for the French controlled the sluices higher up and could keep the Lys too low for traffic,[1] Marlborough's energy collected enough horses to bring what was needed by land and on July 11th/22nd the investment began. Menin was reckoned one of Vauban's masterpieces and was "well provided in everything,"[2] but the siege was pressed with great vigour; "the briskest and regularest carried on in the whole war," writes Millner, whose own regiment, the 18th Royal Irish, distinguished themselves greatly, particularly in the day of furious fighting (August 7th/18th) which gave the Allies the covered way at a cost of 1400 casualties, the wounded including the diarist Parker. Four days later the garrison surrendered. Marlborough was the more relieved by the unexpected

[1] Disp. iii., ii., *cf.*, also Parker (p. 135), and Millner (p. 186).

[2] *Cf.* Lord John Hay's letter in Scottish *Historical Review*, xiv., 237.

rapidity with which Menin fell because on July 24th/August 4th Vendôme had reached Valenciennes from Italy and had taken over command of the French who now mustered 150 squadrons and 75 battalions, having drawn considerable reinforcements out of their garrisons. Vendôme's arrival encouraged them greatly, "he is in such high esteem that they conceive great hopes upon his joining," wrote Lord Tullibardine,[1] and Marlborough, who had never met Vendôme before, apparently inquired of Eugene what manner of man Vendôme might be, for we find Eugene telling him Vendôme was "a man of resolution and enterprise" but "would not attack if resolutely opposed."[2]

But not even the presence of an adversary so superior in quality to the Court favourite Villeroi deterred Marlborough from prosecuting his projects. Dendermonde had till this been merely invested. Charles Churchill was now dispatched to besiege it, while the main army remained at Helchin to cover his operations. Dendermonde had a "sickly and half starved garrison" and was in bad repair, but as Hare wrote, "its strength is water which, though lessened by the extraordinary dry season . . . is still too much to be mastered." The Dutch magazines moreover were so exhausted by "so many conquests that bombs and grenades were wanting,"[3] but Marlborough had had a special supply of ammunition collected at Ghent. At the time he was far from well. Hare wrote that he "wanted nothing but the leisure to be sick," but even illness did not keep him from his work and on August 29th/September 9th

[1] *Cf.* Athole MSS., p. 63.

[2] Disp., iii., 29, *cf.* 71.

[3] Stair, *Annals*, i., 228.

he was rewarded by the fall of Dendermonde, though Louis had boasted that it would want an army of ducks to take the town. Still insatiate he at once dispatched a strong column to besiege Ath, shifting his covering force to Leuze near Tournai. Vendôme might have been expected to attempt something to save Ath but he had been fearing a move against Lille and was unprepared for the new blow: he had therefore to see Ath go the way of Menin and Dendermonde (September 20th/October 1st). The Duke then wanted to move against Mons but at last the Dutch interposed, protesting that further operations at so late a season would ruin their troops. Accordingly at the end of October Marlborough had to let his troops disperse into winter-quarters, the captured fortresses having all been put into a defensible condition and strongly garrisoned.

The campaign had been protracted and exhausting but it had been no less successful and glorious. Ramillies had confirmed the reputation which Blenheim had established, and the vigorous prosecution of victory had borne a fine crop. The expulsion of the French from Brabant and from nearly all Flanders was in brilliant contrast to the usual results of campaigns in those quarters: even Turenne and Condé had never overrun so much territory in the Netherlands or so quickly. Moreover, the opening of the new line of communications with England through Ostend was a notable gain, while if Louis of Baden had failed—much to Marlborough's disgust—to profit by the diversion to the Netherlands of half his opponents, in Italy Eugene had achieved a splendid success. Relieved of Vendôme's opposition by that commander's departure for

Flanders (July) he had routed the French Army of Italy at Turin, relieved the hard-pressed capital of Piedmont, and chased the remnants of the French troops from the Po valley. Turin was a success as striking as Ramillies and its effects were almost more far-reaching, culminating in March, 1707, in a convention for the complete evacuation of Northern Italy by the French. Further afield the Allied fortunes had been more checquered. Leake had indeed raised the siege of Barcelona (May), while Galway had advanced successfully from Portugal and occupied Madrid. However, the Spanish capital had proved untenable in face of a hostile population and of reinforcements from France under Berwick, and the Allies had retired to the borders of Valencia where during the winter they were reinforced by the remnants of the troops allotted to the "descent" on the French coast.

This expedition, commanded by Lord Rivers, had been intended for the mouth of the Charente, whence it was hoped to obtain touch with the Protestant insurgents of the Cévennes. After many vicissitudes it had been diverted to the Mediterranean.[1] That it could have achieved anything had it ever landed in France seems most improbable, but as Gassion, one of Harley's agents, reported, "your descent that was designed for this country put us to a great deal of trouble and expense. But to have landed betwixt La Rochelle and Dunkirk they would have been cut in pieces for there was a vast army on the coast."[2] The episode would not be worth mention but that Marlborough had strongly supported the project and had

[1] *Cf.* Bath MSS., i., 83–176. [2] Portland MSS., iv., 337.

actually parted with three good British battalions for it, clear proofs that he regarded such operations not unfavourably. He had studied "amphibious warfare" sufficiently to appreciate the effect that could in those days of bad communications by land be produced by a mobile force, threatening first one and then another point on the coast. He knew that in Sir Walter Raleigh's words "a fleet could easily without putting itself out of breath outrun the soldiers that coast it," and that a small force, taking advantage of the superior mobility afforded by sea transport could keep a whole coast in alarm and detain considerable bodies of men at points specially vulnerable to a descent from the sea. Off Brest one day, off Belleisle another, then at the mouth of the Loire or Garonne, a few battalions in transports might keep many times their number employed or even tempt out to battle the French fleet which was showing no inclination for a general action.

But if 1706 had gone well for the Allies in the military sphere, clouds were gathering on the political horizon. The clearing of the Netherlands had brought with it a train of disagreements. Marlborough had been scrupulously careful to take possession of the Belgian provinces in Charles III.'s name and to set up a separate administration for them. After Ramillies the Emperor had offered to put him in charge of the provinces himself which Marlborough had declined[1] for fear of arousing Dutch jealousy, but without success in this respect. The Dutch were clamouring for immediate possession of the promised "barrier fortresses," and protested vigorously against any share of the administration

[1] Disp., ii., 701.

being entrusted to the English, trying to appropriate it all themselves. Marlborough indeed found it necessary to write very explicitly to Heinsius that it was not for the pleasure of being put under Dutch control that so many towns had declared for the Allies. Finally a Council of State was set up to govern for Charles III. and Stepney was nominated as English commissioner to act jointly with a Dutchman as administrators of the occupied territory, but the quarrel had left a legacy of ill-will and Louis, ever on the alert for dissensions among his enemies, had his emissaries in Holland seeking to open separate negotiations with the United Provinces. The terms Louis would have conceded show how far Blenheim and Ramillies had driven him from the position taken up in 1701. He was ready to relinquish Spain and the Indies, to satisfy the Dutch over the "barrier," to make commercial concessions to the Maritime Powers and to abandon the exiled Stuarts, but he wanted Milan and the Two Sicilies for Philip. Such terms, though satisfactory to the Dutch, were not acceptable to the Emperor, nor was England prepared to see a French prince established so strongly in Italian waters. But it was less the terms than the negotiations which provoked Marlborough's wrath when he discovered them. Godolphin wrote to Harley in October that "the Duke desires the Queen's leave to speak plainly to them in Holland about the French proposals,"[1] leave which Anne was positively anxious to give. Thus supported Marlborough expressed himself directly enough to Heinsius, who indeed needed little convincing of the true aims of the French, but it was

[1] Bath MSS., i., 107.

clear that many people in Holland were unreasonably jealous of England and that the French emissaries must be carefully watched.[1] For himself Marlborough could see no prospect of peace without another campaign: "I am one," he wrote,[2] "of those who believe that France is not yet reduced to her just bounds and that nothing can be more hurtful to us than seeming over-forward to clap up a hasty peace." Another campaign he hoped would see a substantial difference in the situation, especially if the ill-health of Louis of Baden could be made a pretext to give the command on the Rhine to someone more capable of utilizing advantages.

Meanwhile the political situation in England was beginning to worry Marlborough. The clamours of the Whigs for more places in the ministry were growing increasingly insistent. It was Sunderland whose claims were being most urgently pressed much to Anne's annoyance. The Queen was prepared to admit Sunderland to office but not to a position such as Secretary of State in which she must be constantly meeting him. Marlborough, as always, averse to depending on the Whigs, was also unwilling to press Sunderland on the Queen in face of her strong aversion to the free-thinking Whig leader, but Godolphin, who had good reason to suspect Harley of intrigues, was disposed to conciliate the Whigs and even threatened to resign should Sunderland's claims be refused. From this step Marlborough wrote to dissuade him, "should you quit the service of the Queen you would not only disturb the affairs of England but the liberties of Europe," and simultane-

[1] Bath MSS., i., 105; *cf.* Disp., iii., 168, 194, and 223.

[2] Disp., iii, 165.

ously he begged the Queen to be guided by Godolphin, pointing out the necessity of securing the ministry by obtaining Whig support. But a threat of resignation from Marlborough himself was needed before Anne's opposition was overcome, and not till after the Duke returned to England (November 16th/27th) was the Whig peer appointed Secretary of State in place of Hedges. At the same time two leading Whigs, Cholmondely and Wharton, and Godolphin himself were given earldoms, while the Tory leaders, among them Rochester, Nottingham and Rooke, were removed from the Privy Council. These changes, reluctantly accepted by Anne at Marlborough's personal insistence, may be taken as marking the definite breach with the High Tories. They strengthened the position of the ministry in Parliament not a little, but damaged it at Court, and the violence with which the Duchess had as usual espoused the Whig cause still further estranged her from the Queen. Only with real reluctance did Marlborough find himself gradually relinquishing his cherished neutral position, and his reluctance to break completely with the moderate Tories was largely responsible for the retention of Harley and St. John in the Government.

APPENDIX C

Orkney's Advance

As already mentioned the new information derived from Orkney and Cranstoun leaves no doubt as to the part played by the British infantry, that they advanced across the Gheete and even reached Offuz, but whereas Orkney says his advance was stopped because "my Lord could not attack everywhere," Cranstoun represents Cadogan as having recalled Orkney entirely on his own initiative, because he had been

misled by his map into believing that there was another morass between him and Offuz. Cranstoun criticizes Cadogan most severely: had Orkney been allowed to go on "we had cut off their whole body of infantry entirely" and in that case the French infantry of the left could not have intervened as they did to cover the retreat of their cavalry. By a fortunate and curious coincidence the Duke's own verdict is available. The Bath MSS. (vol. i., pp. 83, 86, 96) contain some interesting letters between Marlborough and Harley about this very letter of Cranstoun's, Harley had apparently seen a copy of it and brought it to Marlborough's notice, presumably because of the unknown writer's criticisms on Cadogan. Marlborough identifies the author as Cranstoun and declares that the criticism on Cadogan is altogether wrong, "for if those troops had not been brought back they had certainly been cut to pieces" (*ibid*, p. 96). Unfortunately the Bath MSS. do not give the sequel, but leave the inquirer in the dark as to the disciplinary action, if any, taken against Cranstoun, nor do the Major's later letters enlighten us; fortunately his letter writing was allowed to continue. It is interesting as illustrating Marlborough's tactical ideas to notice the great importance he evidently attached to sustaining infantry with cavalry. Orkney was fetched back merely because there were no horse to support him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE YEAR OF DISAPPOINTMENT

THE TOULON PROJECT—VISIT TO CHARLES XII.—ALMANZA —A FLANDERS DEADLOCK—EUGENE BEFORE TOULON —ABORTIVE EFFORTS TO DRAW VENDÔME—FAILURE AT TOULON—MARLBOROUGH IN DEBATE—HARLEY DISMISSED—JACOBITE PLANS FOILED.

APART from the trouble over Sunderland the winter of 1706–1707 passed quietly enough and the session of Parliament was chiefly important to Marlborough for the settlement on him and his heirs, male and female, of the Honour of Woodstock. Moreover, to support his dignities an annual charge of five thousand pounds on the Post Office was granted not only to him but to the Duchess for her life and to his daughters, an exceptional and very gratifying honour.[1] More important politically, though not specially connected with the Duke, was the conclusion of the Parliamentary Union with Scotland, a measure for which Marlborough had long been anxious.

During the winter Marlborough was as usual busy with plans and projects. Though Ramillies and its sequel had practically cleared the Spanish Netherlands of the French the Duke was not looking to that quarter to produce decisive results. The French frontier bristled with fortresses and Vendôme's conduct, since he had assumed command, afforded little hope that he would imitate Villeroi and give Marlborough the chance of another Ramillies. For a series of sieges conducted

[1] Disp., iii., 264.

under Vendôme's vigilant eyes Marlborough had no fancy,[1] the capture of a town or two was not the way to finish the war, and with the peace party in Holland growing in strength the Duke was most anxious to force a decision. At first he contemplated resuming the operations on the Moselle which had been frustrated in 1705, but the Dutch vetoed the project. Disappointed in this, Marlborough looked even further afield. From the outset of the war he had never lost sight of the Mediterranean and, if his earlier schemes for crippling French sea-power had been for various reasons frustrated, Eugene's great victory seemed at last to have brought an effective blow at Toulon within reach. Eugene might play the part Savoy had failed to play in 1704 and all through the winter Marlborough worked for the provision of adequate naval support. He had already arranged for the retention in Italy of the Hessians with whom he had reinforced Eugene in such timely fashion in 1706, and for various contingents from minor German principalities to join the Imperial army in Italy;[2] he had even induced the Dutch to promise funds for the campaign. With Galway reinforced by the remnants of the troops allotted to "the descent"—sickness bred of long confinement on shipboard had reduced their numbers sadly[3]—he hoped to have made Spain safe, and the great plan for a joint attack on Toulon by land and sea promised to be launched with favourable prospects, even if Marlborough had to abandon the idea he had at one time entertained of conducting the attack himself.

[1] Disp., iii., 269. [2] *Ibid.*, iii., 255.

[3] *Cf.* Harley's correspondence with Lord Rivers in the Bath MSS.

Meanwhile when Marlborough, after many delays from contrary winds, landed in Holland on April 6th/17th a new adventure had to be faced forthwith. While the Allies had been driving Louis XIV.'s forces back behind their own frontiers and while Marlborough had been adding to his fame as a soldier, North-Eastern Europe had witnessed a series of scarcely less remarkable campaigns; the victories of Narva, Riga, and Klissow had revived the reputation of the Swedish arms so much diminished by Fehrbellin; all Europe was looking to the camp of Charles XII just as seventy-five years earlier it had looked to that of the Lion of the North. Charles XII. was not Gustavus' equal, either as soldier or as statesman, but for the moment he held a commanding position. He had routed the Russians, had turned on his arch enemy Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, had driven him in flight before him, had planted Stanislaus Leczinski on the Polish throne, and pursuing Augustus into Saxony had established his victorious army on German soil at Alt Ranstadt. His presence here filled the Allies with alarm and Louis with hope. Charles had, it is true, no special reason for favouring Louis, the traditional Franco-Swedish alliance was a mere memory, but Charles had many causes of quarrel with the Emperor and on these Louis based his hopes. Anyhow the French monarch was leaving no stone unturned to secure the Swedish soldier-king as an ally. In this emergency the Allies had recourse to Marlborough's diplomatic skill and he was sent posting off across Germany to interview Charles. On April 9th/20th he left The Hague, seven days later he was ushered into the presence of the Swedish King.

They were a strange pair: Marlborough, a man of courts as well as of camps, was polished, suave, careful of his appearance, something almost of a dandy; Charles, nearly thirty years his visitor's junior, had seen little of courts and rather ostentatiously affected the manners and appearance of the hard-fighting soldier; always roughly dressed, accustomed to the coarsest fare, he lacked polish and grace while his reserved and abrupt manner impressed the Duke somewhat unfavourably. However, Marlborough was soon reassured as to the King's intentions. Angry as Charles was with the Emperor over the ill-treatment of the Silesian Protestants, whose champion he had constituted himself, over the grievances of other German Protestants, and over the shelter given to Russian fugitives from his arms, he had no intention of serving as the catspaw of Louis XIV., for the Protestant zeal which Austrian intolerance inflamed was no less potent against Louis, in his eyes the mainstay of Roman Catholic intolerance. When he found England ready to pledge herself to secure justice for the Lutherans of Silesia and to obtain satisfaction for him in some lesser matters, Charles abandoned the idea of forcing his mediation on the belligerents and Marlborough wrote with relief to Wratislaw that Charles had entered into no agreement with France, and was not likely to do so.[1] But he warned the Austrian minister that there was a great coolness on Charles's part towards Vienna, that the Imperial Court would do well to be accommodating in the minor disputes.[2] Towards England Charles was well inclined, and Marlborough won his good graces by

[1] Disp., iii., 350.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii., 357.

declaring he could desire nothing better than to serve some campaigns under his Swedish Majesty in order to learn what he yet wanted to know of the art of war. Charles had perhaps more to learn from Marlborough who could have given him useful examples in self-control, in suiting plans to means, in abstaining from rash and impracticable enterprises. The over-reaching ambition of the march which culminated in Pultowa, the failure to finish one task at a time which had allowed Russia to recover from Narva while Charles vented his animosity on Augustus II., were foreign to Marlborough's steady brain and sober and well-balanced calculations, if in tactical handling of troops and on the battle-field Charles showed daring and resource comparable to Marlborough's own.

Reassured as to Charles's intentions Marlborough did not tarry long at Alt Ranstadt. On April 19th/30th he started back for Holland, on the way negotiating with Augustus II. for a contingent of 4500 Saxons and, as he passed through Berlin, smoothing down the ruffled feelings of King Frederick whom Lord Raby's maladroitness had disturbed. Back at The Hague his thoughts were turning towards a dash at Tournai or Mons before the French could take the field; for some such enterprise as this he had been making preparations as early as January[1] when his high hopes for the season's operations received their first rebuff in the shape of bad news from Spain. Galway, a competent if not always fortunate commander, had opened operations by falling on the magazines Berwick had collected on the borders of Murcia. Berwick advanced promptly

[1] Disp., iii., 289.

against him and the armies met at Almanza (April 14th/25th), the Franco-Spaniards outnumbering by three to two Galway's heterogeneous collection of Dutch, Germans, British, Huguenots, and Portuguese. Unluckily for the Allies the Portuguese showed no stomach for the fight, and well as the other contingents fought, the defection of half the force involved the Allies in complete disaster. Not only was all Valencia lost but an essential element in Marlborough's Mediterranean combination had gone astray.

It was thus under overclouded auspices that Marlborough took the field in May, assembling nearly eighty thousand men[1] at Anderlecht and moving to Soignies, which he reached on May 15th/26th. The French had meanwhile concentrated nearly one hundred thousand men round Mons and having Vendôme in command were "in great hopes we shall not be beat."[2] Vendôme had strict instructions not to fight at a disadvantage, but the numerical superiority in which the French found themselves encouraged them to be unusually venturesome,[3] to leave the lines they had constructed during the winter and to make for Sombreffe as though to invade Brabant. Marlborough was delighted: he had visions of a battle, but foggy weather on May 17th/28th prevented him attacking and let the French shift nearer Louvain. A rapid march to Terbank (May 19th/30th) headed the French off but once

[1] One hundred and sixty-four squadrons and 97 battalions with 112 guns according to Millner (p. 196), from whom the other authorities differ but slightly.

[2] Gassion to Harley, Portland MSS., IV., 411.

[3] Disp., iii., 391; *cf.* Bath MSS., I., 172.

again the inevitable veto of the Dutch Deputies was interposed and Marlborough was brought to a standstill. Almanza had terrified the Dutch and they were alarmed by hearing that the French troops just withdrawn from Lombardy were mostly to be sent to Flanders.[1] Anyhow, their intervention was followed by a long inactivity; Marlborough took post at Meldert, covering the approaches into Brabant between the Dyle and the Gheete. Vendôme faced him twelve miles farther South, inactive also though so strongly posted as to make attack mere folly.[2]

A ten weeks' inactivity was so foreign to Marlborough's temperament that it is not easy to explain. His health was not good, though he had been ill before without allowing operations to be suspended, the weather all through the summer was quite unusually bad, and the persistent opposition of the Dutch Deputies was a serious worry; but it seems that Marlborough was waiting for the diversion against Toulon to take effect.[3] He wrote in June, "I shall be very uneasy until I hear the Duke of Savoy is in Provence, for if the Emperor should spoil that project this campaign must go wrong for our friends will not adventure unless we have an advantage which our enemies will be careful not to give." Accordingly, even though the army was "in great heart and good condition," the enemy's numerical superiority and the "necessity we lie under of covering Brussels and the other towns" prevented him "from giving M. Vendôme that uneasiness we might otherways do."[4] The Duke was the more anxious for good

[1] Bath MSS., i., 173.
[2] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 416.
[3] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 420.
[4] Bath MSS., i., 173.

news from Toulon, the only quarter from which relief might be looked for,[1] because on the Rhine things had gone altogether amiss. Though Louis of Baden's death in January had freed Marlborough from an unaccommodating and uncongenial colleague, his successor, the Margrave of Baireuth, proved equally incompetent and as incapable of rousing to the necessary exertions the lethargic Rhenish princes. Villars, now in command in Alsace, profited by Baireuth's want of prudence to make a dash at the Stolhofen lines (May 11th/22nd). His attack was a complete success.[2] Baireuth and the survivors of his troops fled headlong, and the French overran all Franconia and exacted large contributions from Würtemberg, Baden, and the neighbouring princes and towns. The alarm spread through Southern Germany; the Diet was in hourly expectation of seeing Villars's troopers under the walls of Ratisbon and a detachment actually penetrated to the field of Blenheim intending to destroy a monument reported to have been set up on the battle-field, only to find no such thing in existence. Marlborough wrote urgently to Wratislaw: "For God's sake do not lose any time about getting rid of the Margrave,"[3] and he was successful in getting the command given to the Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I. of England, who if no military genius had respectable capacity. But the Saxons, for whose services Marlborough had negotiated with Elector Augustus, had to be diverted from Flanders to the Rhine, and the effects of Villars's stroke were far-reaching. Cranstoun wrote bitterly: "They have

[1] Disp., iii, 401.

[2] *Cf.* Villars, *Mémoires*, lxx., 211 ff.

[3] Disp., iii., 390.

overrun the lazy and sleepy Empire and not only maintained and paid a great army in it . . . but by vast contributions sent money into France to help the King's other affairs."[1] It was high time indeed that Eugene should move against Toulon.

However, the Emperor would not be dissuaded from an immediate attack upon Naples, now isolated and at his mercy. In vain Marlborough argued against this move. it would upset all the other plans,[2] after Toulon had been taken Naples could be occupied at leisure, the Queen's government would then be delighted to co-operate. The Emperor meant to have Naples in his hands and off Daun went with ten thousand men whom Eugene could ill spare. The Duke of Savoy too proved an unaccommodating colleague and Eugene, whose wont it was to "think everything difficult till he comes to put it into execution,"[3] was in no hopeful mood. However, by the end of June a start was made and the Allied army, thirty-five thousand strong, forced the passage of the Var and advanced on Toulon, driving Marshal Tessé back before it. By July 15th/26th Eugene was at the gates of Toulon and simultaneously Shovel arrived off the port, with so superior a fleet that the French, not venturing to risk a naval battle, burnt or sank most of their ships. For the time success seemed within reach. Villars was hastily recalled across the Rhine and ordered to detach troops to Provence; Vendôme received an equally urgent demand for men to hurry off South.

Directly he received authentic information that

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 441. [2] Disp., iii., 250, 279, 327.
[3] Marlborough to Godolphin, June 27, 1707.

twelve of Vendôme's battalions and as many squadrons had marched for Provence[1] Marlborough was on the move himself, having won the Deputies' consent to an offensive. The weather was abominable; Marlborough wrote that they had had so much rain that he could "scarce stir out of his quarters, the dirt being up to the horses' bellies," but if he were to profit by the diversion in Provence there must be no delay.

At the moment chosen for the move the French were near Genappe and Marlborough near Louvain. His design was to cover the distance between them by a sudden and rapid march Southward which would bring him close enough to force them to action should they try to retire to their lines near Mons. On July 31st/August 11th the march was made to Nivelles, from which place Marlborough decided to push forward during the night a strong advanced guard under Count Tilly. If the French had, as Marlborough expected[2] decamped, Tilly was to press on, engage their rear-guard, and so detain Vendôme till the Allied main body came up. Unfortunately, to preserve complete secrecy Marlborough had not disclosed to Tilly the full orders for his task, and Tilly, only receiving his instructions at 11 P.M., when it was pitch dark and pouring with rain, was over an hour waiting for a light by which to read them, and then delayed yet further over finding a guide.[3] Consequently at daybreak Tilly's detachment was nowhere near its intended place, and for all that when "they had notice the enemy was marching" they "ran like horses for two leagues in hopes to fall in with them," the French had given them the slip and by

[1] Disp., iii., 508. [2] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 442. [3] *Ibid.*

marching all that day and well into the next got back behind their lines. The Allies pressed them close, cut off many stragglers, and picked up two thousand deserters, but the Duke's hopes of celebrating the anniversary of Blenheim with "a like good success" were disappointed and the appalling state of the roads[1] soon brought both sides again to a standstill, the French near Mons, Marlborough with headquarters at Soignies.

For a fortnight the rains enforced inactivity. Then they lifted sufficiently to allow another attempt at forcing a battle. This time Marlborough moved Westward from Soignies, crossed the Dender at Ath (August 20th/September 1st), threatening the French left and causing them to decamp hastily at break of day towards the Scheldt. They moved with such precipitation as to leave behind much baggage and provision, but they did avoid a battle. "Providence," wrote Blackader, "has taken away much of their heads they had last war but I think he has left them their heels." Certainly Vendôme would not be drawn; Marlborough wrote to Eugene that the Marshal's manœuvres had corresponded exactly to the character Eugene had given of him.[2] In vain the Allies pushed on, across the Scheldt at Oudenarde (August 25th/September 5th) and up the tongue of land between Scheldt and Lys until they reached Helchin (August 27th/September 7th). Vendôme drew back behind the Marque under the guns of Lille. In vain Marlborough baited a trap with a detachment who pretended to forage dangerously

[1] Blackader speaks of the infantry marching "in clay and dirt up to their knees," the cavalry having "broken the ways" (p. 302).

[2] Disp., iii., 520.

near their enemies; Vendôme was too wary to be taken in.[1] The troops kept the field well into October before dispersing to winter-quarters, but if Marlborough was, as Cranstoun reports, "much out of humour and peevish" it was scarcely wonderful. Not only in Flanders and Spain had things gone amiss, the great design upon Toulon had failed completely. Reinforcements from Spain, set free by Almanza, arrived just in time and gave Tessé so near an equality with Eugene that a regular investment proved impossible. The Naples detachment might have turned the scale, without it Eugene could not conduct the siege and keep Tessé in check. Despite all endeavours Eugene had to retreat: before August was out he was back behind the Var, his high hopes utterly disappointed. The destruction by the French of the bulk of the Toulon fleet and Villars's enforced retreat across the Rhine were all that the Allies had to set against the failure.

Cranstoun in a remarkable letter,[2] written as this "most unprosperous" campaign was closing, comments that the Allies had "ever been least successful" when they "reckoned most on ourselves." He contrasts 1702 when, after they "had been beaten within the ramparts of Nimuegen," they "had in one campaign cleared all the great country of the Meuse with a rapidity and torrent of success" with the disappointments of 1703, when the Allies had started "flushed at success and thinking to do yet greater things" but had done no more than capture the petty places of Huy and Limburg. Similarly in 1704, "when we despaired of

[1] Millner, p. 203.

[2] Portland MSS., iv., 439–441.

doing anything here and the Empire was at the very brink of being swallowed up," "our going up into Germany, a dangerous project and perhaps the result of despair," had led to "those glorious and unprecedented triumphs of Schellenberg, Hochstadt, Landau, and Trærback" and had "so elated us that in the fourth year (1705) we had already in our thoughts overrun Lorraine and ended the war at once by going to the gates of Paris," only to be thwarted and forced to return to the Netherlands "to stop the current of the enemy's victories."

Again at the beginning of 1706 there had seemed no likelihood of achieving anything against the French lines, when the French being "moved in the confidence of their strength" to risk a battle had suffered Ramillies which, vigorously exploited, had given the Allies practically all the Netherlands, besides influencing not a little the course of affairs in Italy. After the glorious "year of victories" the Allies not unreasonably formed high hopes for 1707 but, instead of seeing France "forever ruined at sea" by the "well concerted design" on Toulon and reduced to accept the Allies' terms, the year had produced a fiasco against Toulon, a disaster in Spain, and a lame and impotent campaign in Flanders, in which the main force of the Allies had been completely thwarted by Vendôme's steadfast adherence to defensive strategy.

Marlborough therefore returned to England in no sanguine mood (November 7th/18th).[1] A visit to Frankfort had encouraged him for he had found the Electors of Hanover and Mayence full of zeal; and he

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 442.

had also achieved an important diplomatic success by bringing to a satisfactory issue the negotiations, more than once very near shipwreck, between the Emperor and the intractable Charles XII. But at The Hague he had found lethargy, despondency, and want of zeal: he had to report to Godolphin that "the States" would not augment their troops and were far more inclined to peace on any terms.[1] Their finances were in disorder and the Duke was most discouraged by the attitude he encountered.[2] Moreover his own health was troubling him and he actually suggested to Godolphin that Eugene should command in Germany and the Elector of Hanover in Flanders, since if things should "go as I think they will, both in England and Holland, nothing shall prevail with me to lose that reputation I have hazarded for this war." Indeed affairs in England were anything but satisfactory. The Queen had offended the ministry by giving important ecclesiastical preferments to Tories; the Whigs on their part had given trouble, Halifax in particular having headed a violent attack on the Board of Admiralty, of which Marlborough's brother George was the leading member. Moreover relations with Harley were getting strained and through his kinswoman Abigail Hill he was actually maintaining secret communications with Anne and intriguing against Marlborough and Godolphin, suggesting that they wanted to make her completely dependent on themselves. Anne, as anxious now to get rid of the Duchess of Marlborough as she had formerly been dependent on her, fell easily under Abigail Hill's influence, and Marlborough could not but notice that the Queen

[1] *Cf.* Bath MSS., i., 183. [2] Disp., iii., 629, 635.

no longer exhibited the old accustomed confidence in him.

However, when conclusions were tried in Parliament Marlborough and Godolphin held their own successfully. The Houses met in December whereupon Rochester and Nottingham denounced with great vigour the policy of offensive operations in the Netherlands, criticising bitterly the abortive proceedings of the recent campaign, belittling all that had been accomplished in Flanders, and urging the transfer of twenty thousand men from that quarter to Spain where they wished to see England's chief efforts exerted. In Flanders Nottingham declared "we might war to eternity and never come to anything decisive." Marlborough replied with equal vigour, showing that "already due care had been taken for the relief of Spain," a strong German reinforcement having been arranged, and went on to say that although Spain was of great concern, Flanders was yet of more, because if the French were much superior in that quarter they could overrun the Netherlands and force the Dutch to a separate peace. Not only were operations in Catalonia far more expensive and difficult to maintain than in Flanders but Rochester's proposals were just what the Francophil party in Holland would welcome.[1]

Rochester had not only given Marlborough an opportunity of showing how Flanders was the more important theatre of war, since on the continued adherence of Holland to the Alliance so much depended, he

[1] There is an excellent account of the debate in the Egmont MSS, vol. ii., 219–221, in some letters from Sir John Perceval, afterwards first Earl of Egmont, to a correspondent in Ireland.

had also declared that people wanted to know how Government would dispose their supplies. Marlborough speaking with "some warmth" trounced him; "should the Queen dispose her resolutions so long beforehand the French would be provided on the side we designed to attack." It was unreasonable, he went on, that people should "murmur against keeping things secret which, if disclosed, would come to nothing," and it was hard the ministry at home "who take such care of the public" and "those who expose their lives abroad for its safety should be schooled by people who know little or nothing of the truth how things are managed" He challenged Rochester to show "where and how there had been any neglect or mismanagement" and concluded that "it was impossible last campaign to fight the enemy in Flanders by reason of their numbers, till the detachment was made to cover Toulon," and then he had "lost not a moment in dancing after them who retired from post to post and could not be brought to fight." "We cannot," he said, "promise every day victories," but he "was sure he served his country with as good a heart as any Briton whatever and he might say without vanity with success too, since the Lords themselves had told him so." Rochester could only say he was sorry that anything that fell from him should "put that noble Duke out of the temper he was noted for in all places," and Peterborough actually came to the help of the ministry by dwelling on the difficulty of getting Germans to serve in Spain; Eugene had told him, he said, "every fourth man would choose death in preference if proposed to his army to be shot to death or to go thither." The incident is of more interest because

it is one of the few glimpses we have of Marlborough's intervention in debate; it was noted that he was usually prominent in beating off this attack, the net result of which was that the Whigs, appeased by several places on the reconstructed Admiralty Board, rallied to the ministry, that ample supplies were voted with an augmentation of the Army by ten thousand men and a resolution was carried by both Houses that no peace could be "reasonable or safe, either for her Majesty or her Allies, if Spain and the West Indies were suffered to continue in the power of the House of Bourbon." Encouraged by this Godolphin determined to tackle Harley. One of the latter's clerks, William Greg, had been detected in correspondence with France, and this was used as a weapon against his master. But when the Queen was requested to dismiss Harley she flatly refused. Godolphin threatened resignation without result, whereupon Marlborough declared he would stand or fall with Godolphin and the two abstained from attending the Cabinet. On this the other ministers professed themselves unable to transact business, and the consternation exhibited in Parliament and in the City at the prospect of Marlborough's resignation showed Harley that the game was up and on February 11th he resigned. St. John went with him; in the latter's place Robert Walpole took office for the first time, becoming Secretary at War, while Boyle and Smith, ardent Whigs both, became respectively Secretary of State and Chancellor of the Exchequer. But the victory earned the ministry the Queen's hostility. Slow moving but stubbornness itself when roused, she bitterly resented this rebuff and it was Marlborough whom she held mainly responsible.

But if the friction between the Queen and her leading ministers was an earnest of future trouble, for the moment the national ardour for the war was greatly strengthened by a sudden revival of Jacobite activities and an alarm of a French invasion on behalf of the Pretender. The main feature of their scheme was that a squadron under the celebrated privateer Forbin should escort to Scotland twelve thousand men from Dunkirk. Marlborough, however, received early warning of the project[1] and laid his plans accordingly. Ten battalions were hurried to Ostend from their winter-quarters round Ghent and Bruges[2] and held in readiness to embark. Other troops were moved to Tynemouth, Hull, Berwick, and Carlisle. Edinburgh and Stirling were strongly garrisoned, a squadron sent to observe Dunkirk and leading Jacobites arrested. Ultimately in March Forbin managed to slip through the blockaders in a gale but several of his ships parted company and he arrived in the Firth of Forth to find that he had run into the arms of Sir George Byng's squadron. He was lucky to escape with the loss of only one ship and the net result of the attempt was seen at the elections of 1708 when a strong Whig majority was returned, pledged to continue the war.

[1] Disp., iii., 677.

[2] *Cf.* Kane, p. 72.

CHAPTER XIV

OUDENARDE

PLANS AND PROJECTS—THE FRENCH RECOVER GHENT AND BRUGES—THEY MOVE ON OUDENARDE—MARLBOROUGH'S MARCH—AN ENCOUNTER BATTLE

THE political troubles of the winter had not caused Marlborough to neglect the arrangements for the next campaign. His main endeavour was to improve matters in Spain and to rouse the Emperor to greater exertions for his brother's cause. The invasion of Provence had at least afforded some relief to the Allies in the Peninsula and after much difficulty the Elector Palatine's consent had been obtained for the dispatch of his contingent, seven thousand strong, from Italy to Catalonia, but the Emperor expected England and the Dutch to bear the whole cost of the German troops in Spain, even of the small contingent from Austria itself.[1] This stung Marlborough into bitter complaints. He wrote to Heinsius in December:

It is very melancholy to reflect how little the Emperor and the Empire have done for their own preservation and how little they seem disposed to exert themselves when their all is in a manner at stake. It is to be feared the reliance and assistance they have hitherto had upon England and Holland has been one inducement to their negligence of themselves and therefore it behoves us to be very plain with them without loss of time, in letting them know that though

[1] Disp., iii., 572, 595.

we do not want inclination and zeal to support them yet we have not the means.

He had already warned the Grand Pensionary, "though we seem in London to make a good appearance, if you could be thoroughly apprized of the great scarcity of money in the country and the decay of trade in our seaports, you would not think our condition to differ much from that you represent Holland to be in."[1] He was again annoyed when the Emperor vetoed the suggestion to send Eugene to Spain. Writing about this time to the Elector of Hanover he commented bitterly on the "great ingratitude" shown at Vienna, but for all that he was careful that when Wratislaw's letters were published nothing should appear which could be detrimental to the general cause.

On reaching The Hague early in April, Marlborough found Eugene awaiting him. The representations addressed to the Court of Vienna during the winter had produced some effect and the Emperor had promised twenty thousand men for the Rhine and to maintain twelve thousand in Italy. For the main operations the idea was to give Eugene forty thousand men on the Moselle, including the Saxon, Hessian, Palatine, and Imperial contingents, while the Elector of Hanover with various South German contingents and some Hanoverians and Prussians, perhaps thirty thousand all told, operated in Alsace and Marlborough with a considerably augmented force, 180 squadrons and 112 battalions, took the field in the Netherlands. The ostensible object of Eugene's force was the resumption

[1] Disp., iii., 650–652.

of the project of 1705, actually it was always intended to reinforce the main body in the Netherlands.[1] For the moment, however, its presence on the Moselle concealed the true intentions of the Allies and the French assigned to the Upper Rhine a considerable force under the joint command of Berwick and the Elector of Bavaria, the latter having declined to serve under Louis's grandson, the Duke of Burgundy, to whom the nominal command in the Netherlands was entrusted, Vendôme being associated with him to supply the experience he lacked. For this quarter the French by great exertions had collected one hundred thousand men,[2] a force decidedly stronger than Marlborough's The opening of operations in 1708 was much delayed by an exceptionally late spring and then by want of rain, and not till May 10th/21st could Marlborough assemble his army at Anderlecht, to shift immediately to Hal. At the same time Eugene's army was ordered to assemble near Coblence, though the Prince himself was detained at Vienna by minor obstructions, while the Elector Palatine seized the opportunity to demand the immediate cession of the territory his ancestor had been forced to cede to Bavaria in 1648 and refused to produce his contingent till he was satisfied. Marlborough thus found that his project of a stroke at Charleroi could not be attempted since without Eugene he was too inferior in numbers to risk anything.

The French for all their superiority seemed in no hurry for battle. Simultaneously with Marlborough's

[1] *Cf.* Disp., iii., 715.

[2] Parker's figure (p. 142) is 204 squadrons and 139 battalions, Millner's (p. 205) is 207 squadrons and 132 battalions.

concentration Vendôme collected his army at Mons, but beyond advancing towards Soignies (May 15th/26th) he attempted nothing. For a week the two armies faced each in inactivity, then the French suddenly broke camp and marched on Braine l'Alleud (May 21st/June 1st) as though for Louvain.. Marlborough countered this by moving to Parc near Louvain, a forced march performed in pouring rain which Deane of the Grenadier Guards describes as "very tedious with wet and dirt and extraordinary great rains so that it was thought full as bad as the march last year between Nivelle and Soignies." These difficulties notwithstanding the French were headed off, on which they halted at Gembloux, displaying no desire for a fight. Marlborough had therefore to possess his soul in patience while awaiting Eugene's arrival, and it was most disappointing to hear (June 14th/25th) that Eugene's army could not be mustered before June 17th/28th. Hare wrote on June 11th/22nd "the backwardness of our friends on the Rhine and Moselle keeps us here in perfect inaction. Prince Eugene has scarce yet left Vienna where that Court plays the fool eternally." All Marlborough could do was to watch his enemy closely and to spend his time reviewing his army. He was comforted by what he saw. To the Prince Royal of Prussia he wrote on June 7th/18th that the Prussian infantry, "always good, were never better" and he was able to assure Queen Anne that at a cavalry review her Majesty's horse had "appeared with a great deal of distinction, though all were in very good order." His British contingent had been increased, notably by a battalion of the Grenadier Guards and the 19th Foot (now Yorkshire Regiment).

The next move came from the French. Dissatisfaction with the oppressive government of the Dutch had been steadily increasing in Flanders and profiting by this, the French had got into touch with malcontents at Ghent and Bruges, who agreed to open those towns to them whenever the main French Army should move into West Flanders. The French aimed at recovering the lines of the Lys and the Scheldt and at cutting the Allies' communications with England through Ostend; in a word at undoing the results of Ramillies. And at first they seemed to be succeeding. On the evening of June 22nd/July 3rd they broke up from near Braine l'Alleud and, marching rapidly Westward, crossed the Senne at Hal and Tubize, whence they made for the Dender at Grammont. Advanced detachments arrived before Ghent and Bruges on the morning of June 24th/July 5th; Bruges surrendered on being summoned and though the garrison of Ghent, three hundred men of Temple's regiment, retired into the citadel and held out for some days the town passed into French hands at once. Thus quickly they became possessed of the control of the waterways of Western Flanders and at once prepared to exploit their success by the occupation of Oudenarde. This town on the Scheldt, "a point of the highest consequence in a military view" as the "connecting link for the alternate defence of Brabant and Flanders," "the chief avenue to the Allies' other fortresses in Flanders" and "the only channel of their direct communications with England,"[1] was held by a small Allied garrison, which Marlborough managed to reinforce from Ath before the investment was complete, but there

[1] *Cf.* Disp., ii., 248.

was no denying that the French had scored the first trick. Should Oudenarde fall the Allies would be severed from their remaining garrisons beyond the Lys.[1]

Marlborough had acted with great promptitude directly he heard the French were moving. He pushed forward a brigade of cavalry to Alost to keep touch with the enemy, and set his main body in motion in two columns, the left for Anderlecht, the right for Tourbeck Mill.[2] However, the roads were in bad condition and the march proved toilsome and tedious, and though towards evening on June 23rd/July 4th the Allies came up with the French rear-guard their artillery were far behind, and during the night the French decamped unengaged, skilfully covered by a rear-guard. This, according to Millner, "falsified and flourished its colours apace in the scrub in our front as if all their army had been there a posting to give our army battle," while Hare declares that for a time it was believed the French were coming towards us, he adds that had Cadogan, who was away on a mission to Eugene, only been present "he would have known the difference between their coming to us and marching by us and would have given his Grace better intelligence." Anyhow not till noon did the Allies discover the true state of affairs. The rear-guard was then promptly tackled by the Allied cavalry and heavily punished for its temerity, but the French main body was well away and establishing itself lower down the Dender about Alost. Here they covered the reduction of the citadel of Ghent and also threatened Brussels, to cover which place Marlborough moved his main body to Assche, midway between Alost

[1] *Cf.* Parker, p. 144.

[2] *Cf.* Hare MSS., p. 217.

and the Belgian capital. He himself was far from well and was kept in bed all one day by a hot fever-fit but "something he took in the afternoon carried it off with a gentle sweat and he rose much mended."[1] In moving to Alost Vendôme and Burgundy had taken a risk. If they were astride Marlborough's communications with Ostend they had exposed their own with Tournay and Lille and it was open to Marlborough to interpose his army between them and France. He could only do this by uncovering Brussels but Eugene's army was now coming within reach and on June 25th/July 6th the Prince himself arrived at Assche, having ridden on ahead of his cavalry who on that day were within two miles of Maastricht. Berwick with a strong detachment was also making for Flanders; he had started off directly he discovered Eugene's men were in movement Westward but he was many days behind. Once Eugene's troops arrived Vendôme and Burgundy would find West Flanders a dangerous neighbourhood. As it was the resistance of the little garrison of Ghent had not been without effect. The French had apparently originally intended to retire nearer their own frontier directly they secured Ghent and Bruges; their three days' detention before Ghent gave Marlborough time to perfect his plans for a counter-stroke.

When Ghent capitulated (June 26th/July 7th) there was some hesitation in the French camp whether Menin and Oudenarde should be the next objective,[2] but the decision was for Oudenarde and it was up the Dender on Lessines that they directed their march, at the same time ordering up siege guns from Tournai to

[1] Hare, p. 218.

[2] *Cf.* Berwick's *Mémoires*, ii., p. 115.

Oudenarde. The moment Marlborough heard they had started he set his troops in motion. He had already made arrangements to move rapidly when his chance came; a letter[1] to the King of Prussia explains how he would have eight days' supply of bread ready to be taken along "that we may meet with no obstacle on this account," and Hare relates how the baggage had been cut down "with a greater strictness than has been used on our side this war that we may have nothing to hinder our march."[2] About 2 A.M. on June 28th/July 9th the Allies left Assche in a South-Easterly direction, Orkney with a strong rear-guard being charged with the special mission of seeing that the French did not, under cover of the move on Lessines, dash at Brussels. Once begun the march was carried out with "great expedition" (Millner), the careful arrangements for keeping the roads clear of baggage worked admirably (Hare) and by noon Herfelingen, near Enghien and fifteen miles from Assche, had been reached. But only a short halt was allowed and the columns were soon on the march again. Cadogan's advance-guard, pressing on ahead, reached Lessines about midnight and while his pioneers were throwing bridges across the Dender the main body, quitting Herfelingen about 7 P.M. and marching all through the night, came up during the morning and by noon June 29th/July 10th had encamped at Lessines. The total march was nearly thirty miles and such a move in less than thirty-six hours was a great performance and altogether baffled the French. On the morning of June 29th/July 10th the heads of their columns were sighted approaching Lessines and expecting nothing

[1] Disp., iv., 91. [2] Hare MSS., p. 218; *cf.* Disp., iv., 106.

less than to find themselves anticipated. Surprised and discomfited to find themselves outmarched they swerved away at once to their right, making for Gavre, some six miles lower down the Scheldt than Oudenarde.

Marlborough had won the second trick handsomely but his advantage must not be let slip. If Vendôme and Burgundy were allowed to pass the Scheldt and move up the left bank unhindered nothing could prevent them taking up a strong position in front of Lille, covered by the Scheldt from Condé to Tournai and linking up with Mons on the right and the Yser and Ypres on the left. While he had them out in the open away from their frontier fortresses he must not let them escape unfought. Accordingly about daybreak on June 30th/July 11th the indefatigable Cadogan was afoot again, making for Oudenarde with an advance-guard of fifteen squadrons, twelve battalions, thirty-two guns, and all the pontoons. His orders were to cross the river at Oudenarde, secure the heights on the left bank, and lay additional bridges for the passage of the main body. The Duke calculated that a forced march would enable Cadogan to anticipate the French, who were bridging the river lower down, and would thus give time for the whole army to cross to the left bank before Vendôme and Burgundy could move past Oudenarde on their way to Lille.[1] He knew that at the French head-quarters relations were far from harmonious; Burgundy resenting Vendôme's advice, the Marshal fearing to be made the scapegoat for the errors into which he saw his Royal colleague was likely to plunge. Vendôme knew that Eugene's troops would soon be up; he was beginning "to wish he had never

[1] *Cf.* Disp., iv., 109.

undertook that fine project,"[1] and was anxious to get quickly back behind the frontier.

Cadogan's men, for all their previous exertions, carried out their march with great dispatch and by 10.30 A.M. were laying their "tin-boats" over the Scheldt just below Oudenarde and pushing up the slopes beyond the river. About four miles below Oudenarde the Scheldt changes course fairly sharply from North-East to North-West, working round the Northern end of some low hills which rise on its Western bank. These hills follow much the same direction as the river and are intersected by several smaller streams flowing into the Scheldt. Immediately West of Oudenarde rises the Boser Couter, a broad hill which stretches Westward for a couple of miles round the head of two small valleys and then drops beyond the village of Oycke into the valley of the Norken, the largest of these tributaries. Along the crest of the Boser Couter a road runs Northward by the village of Bevere and descends into a depression by which a stream coming down from the Boser Couter past Schaerken village reaches the Scheldt at Eyne. Beyond this dip the ground rises again and stretches North for another three miles, forming the Eastern side of an amphitheatre. At the bottom of this ran the Norken, while on the ridge, which rose beyond the Norken and formed the Western side of the amphitheatre, the village of Huysse was the most prominent object. On the Eastern ridge were more villages, Groenewald and Heurne, while the valley of the Norken was much cut up by hedges and ditches and the banks were covered with brushwood. To secure the passage

[1] Kane, p. 74.

of the river there was need to occupy the Bevere hill, the hill immediately above Eyne, and the villages of Groenewald and Heurne.

When Cadogan reached the Scheldt the French were still passing the river at Gavre and the heights above Oudenarde and Eyne were unoccupied. As quickly as possible the river was crossed and the cavalry pushed up on the ridge. As they crowned it they saw in the valley of the Norken parties of the enemy's cavalry reconnoitring and collecting forage, while on the ridge beyond Vendôme's advanced guard under the Marquis de Biron was moving slowly forward from Gavre. The quarrels in the French camp had played into Marlborough's hands, Vendôme had wished to fight for the passage of the Dender but, being overruled, had relapsed into sulky inactivity and, while Cadogan with Marlborough's main body at his heels had been racing across from Dender to Scheldt, the French had wasted valuable time before crossing and had also neglected to observe their enemy. Cadogan was thus able to catch the French foragers off their guard, and though Biron came up in strength and drove him back on his infantry the Marquis drew off when he encountered British and Dutch battalions established between Bevere and Eyne.[1]

On hearing the Allies were across the Scheldt Vendôme judged that it could only be an advanced guard and was anxious to fall upon the exposed detachment before its main body could get up, believing that there was time to seize the Groenewald-Heurne hill with his left and to post the right on the Boser Couter. But

[1] Cadogan's detachment included six British battalions, the 8th, 18th, 23rd, and 37th, with Orrery's and Evans's, subsequently disbanded.

Burgundy interposed and gave orders for the line to be formed on the heights to the West of the Norken. Seven Swiss battalions therefore, having received Vendôme's order to occupy Heurne but not the countermanding message, advanced unsupported and mistaking their destination pushed on towards Eyne. By this time it was 2 P.M., Cadogan's infantry were all across and the heads of the Allies' main body were drawing near. They had started at 8 A.M. and by dint of hard marching arrived in the nick of time. Seeing reinforcements at hand Cadogan launched Sabine's brigade of British against the Swiss, pushing forward some Hanoverian cavalry under Rantzau on Sabine's left to intercept their retreat, while Marlborough who had arrived with the head of the main body brought half a dozen guns up into position on the hill above Schaerken,[1] and sent orders for the cavalry of the left wing to pass through Oudenarde itself to reduce the crowd at the pontoon-bridges.

There was a sharp fight for Eyne but Pfeiffer's Swiss were soon ousted by Sabine's attack and, retiring towards the Norken, were caught by Rantzau's horsemen; three of the seven battalions were taken almost to a man, and the others and some squadrons who tried to succour them were dispersed. This disaster apparently upset Burgundy's balance. Had he maintained his position on the Huysse ridge, with the intricate Norken valley in front, the Allies could hardly have arrived in sufficient numbers to attack him before nightfall, and even if they could have formed their line of battle the fatiguing march under a July sun would

[1] *Cf.* Millner, p. 216.

have left them far from fresh. However, Burgundy was now set on an attack and about 4 P.M. the French began to advance. Their plan apparently was to push forward their right to gain the high ground immediately above Oudenarde but, either by accident or, according to one account, because Burgundy countermanded a move Vendôme had ordered, their left failed to advance at the same time. To meet the move Marlborough pushed forward Cadogan's infantry to Groenewald, his object being to prevent the enemy getting out of the enclosed country and forming up in the open. There could be no question of forming up regularly for battle, but the Duke, though so weak from his fever that he could scarce sit his horse, never showed to greater advantage. "Having no time to give exact dispositions for attacking the enemy," writes Millner, he "ordered what was up, as they were, to begin and attack and the rest, as they came, to fall in accordingly." About the first of the main body to come up were the bulk of the British infantry under Argyle; with these Marlborough prolonged Cadogan's left between Groenewald and Schaerken. Barely had Argyle taken post in the hedges which fringed the plain than he was heavily attacked by the infantry of the French right. The struggle was fiercely contested. At one time the French outflanked some Prussians on Argyle's left; before they could improve their success Marlborough sent Lottum at them with some newly arrived Hanoverian and Prussian foot and stopped their advance. Meanwhile, Eugene, who is described as having been here, there, and everywhere . . . "as if he had been aide-de-camp to some or all the generals," took command

on the right and pushed forward with the British horse past Heurne, coming up on Cadogan's right. But here the failure of the French left to come forward level with their right and centre made the fighting less fierce and it was on the other wing that the day was decided.

Marlborough had been quick to perceive the importance of the Boser Couter as connecting up the various spurs and giving access to the Norken without leaving the high ground. He saw too that the French, sharply engaged round Groenewald and Schaerken, had failed to possess themselves of the heights round Oycke and that if he could seize these their right would find itself "in the air" and liable to enfilade. Accordingly, satisfied that Cadogan was holding his own and that the right was safe in Eugene's charge, he himself took command of the Dutch and Hanoverian infantry of the left wing and pressed forward from Bevere with them, while Auverquerque with the cavalry of the left and some Danish battalions in support made a wide sweeping movement Westward along the Boser Couter to gain the rear of the French right. The evening was already closing in and the French, hotly engaged in the valley and closely pressed by the Dutch and Hanoverian foot, never saw Auverquerque till he had passed Oycke and then, changing front to his right, came down into the low ground behind their flank. About the same time the infantry of the Allied right began to gain ground also. Deane, the Grenadier, describes how the two battalions of the Guards, supported by two British brigades, "advanced and put the enemy to the rightabout with fire, having received theirs without much damage" and though by reason of the

ground,[1] the British cavalry could give but little support to their foot their presence deterred the French cavalry of the left from advancing into the plain.

The position of the French was now almost desperate. The Maison du Roi made gallant but ineffectual efforts to check Auverquerque, but many of their cavalry cut but a poor figure, for they "made a poor shameful fight of it and saved themselves by their horses' heels."[2] Meanwhile, the infantry under Marlborough's own command were coming on fast; "we drove the enemy," writes Millner, "from ditch to ditch, from hedge to hedge, and from out of one scrub to another in great hurry, confusion, and disorder"; indeed, but for the rapidly increasing darkness, most of the French right and centre must have been taken. "If we had been so happy to have had two hours more of daylight," wrote Marlborough to the Duchess, "I believe we should have made an end of this war."[3] As it was, darkness stopped the battle about 9 P.M., and let many of the French slip across the Norken before Auverquerque's encircling movement was complete. But the French army was none the less ruined. "I have given such a blow to their foot that they will not be able to fight any more this year," wrote Marlborough exultantly to Godolphin. The prisoners alone were found to amount to over nine thousand,[4] the killed and wounded were estimated at above six thousand, and the deserters as over two thousand. A French officer confessed that forty of their battalions had practically ceased to exist.[5] Of guns

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 499.
[2] Parker, p. 147.
[3] Disp., iv., 111.
[4] Millner, p. 218; *cf.* Disp., iv., 137.
[5] Brodrick, p. 238, *cf.* Hare, p. 218.

only ten fell into the Allies' hands, for the French had brought but few into the battle, but of their waggons and baggage they hardly rescued any. Fortunately for them part of Vendôme's wing was intact and they, making good use of the enclosed nature of the country, did prevent the Allied cavalry from pressing the pursuit, thanks to which the French army reached comparative safety behind the canal from Bruges to Ghent. But it was a broken and discomfited force which rallied there with the victorious Allies between them and home and with their generals "in great discontent one with another."[1] Marlborough had ample reason for writing "that which is our greatest advantage is the terror that is in their army. . . . The Duke of Vendôme's army is so frightened I am very confident if we could get them out of their intrenchments and from behind the canal . . . we should beat them with half their numbers, especially their foot." But in those days to attack even a beaten army behind as strong a position as the Bruges-Ghent Canal was a proposition not to be hastily embraced and Marlborough had other projects in view.

Oudenarde is remarkable among Marlborough's victories because it was an "encounter battle," "the conduct of which is perhaps the most difficult task a general can undertake,"[2] while in the eighteenth century it was the exception to fight an action in which neither side was systematically drawn up in order of battle; even at Ramillies, where both armies had been on the move to start with, the French had had time to take up their position before Marlborough could attack. But at Oudenarde there had been no forming up and Marl-

[1] Millner, p. 217.

[2] *Cf.* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 116.

borough had shown his promptitude and tactical insight in his judicious handling of the successive detachments as they arrived. By pushing forward Cadogan to Groenewald so as to prevent the French from getting out of the enclosed country into the open he had checked their main body of infantry with a weaker force and had given an example in tactics of the principle of "economy of forces," as well as a proof of his eye for ground and his capacity to turn to good use obstacles and broken country. It had enabled Marlborough to have a strong column in hand for the decisive movement along the Boser Couter which had so ably utilized the insecurity of the French right. That the disagreements between Vendôme and Burgundy contributed to the Allied victory is beyond dispute but their strained relations were no secret to Marlborough and encouraged him to run risks he would not otherwise have ventured. Certainly he risked much in pushing Cadogan's advanced guard across the Scheldt and in letting him engage while the Allied main body was still spread out on the roads from Lessines, but in war nothing is to be achieved without taking risks and it is one measure of generalship to know what risks can be taken As at Blenheim and Ramillies a special feature was the care taken by Marlborough in posting his artillery and, as in those battles, horse and foot were worked in the closest co-operation. And that the man who achieved all this fought his battle when "very sick and in a fit of fever," yet "would needs be on horseback and commanded and directed all the whole business with his ordinary prudence and courage," would have been a great feat in a young man, it is doubly remarkable in one within two years of sixty.

CHAPTER XV

LILLE

FOLLOWING UP THE VICTORY—THE PROPOSAL TO INVADE FRANCE—EUGENE'S OPPOSITION—LILLE INVESTED—BERWICK JOINS VENDÔME—THE RELIEVERS BAFFLED—CONVOYS AND COMMUNICATIONS—WYNENDAEL—BRUSSELS IN DANGER—MARLBOROUGH TO THE RESCUE—THE SCHELDT PASSED—FALL OF LILLE—RECOVERY OF GHENT AND BRUGES

NOT the least satisfactory feature of Oudenarde was the low cost the Allies had had to pay for victory. Their total casualties barely exceeded three thousand,[1] while the British, though they had "been in the hottest of it and done wonders" earning Eugene's special commendation, came off very lightly. Moreover, Eugene's troops now began arriving at Brussels "so that is a new fresh army ready to push on after the victory."[2] The Allies lost no time improving their success. Lottum with a strong detachment was despatched to demolish the French lines between Ypres and the Lys, which useful service was completed long before Berwick could arrive from Alsace. That commander had reached Givet on the Meuse on the day of the battle and heard of his colleague's disaster on the following evening. He hastened to Tournai to find things even worse than he feared. Vendôme had stripped the frontier garrisons to reinforce his field army, and the frontier was almost un-

[1] Parker's figure is 824 killed, 2146 wounded (p. 147), Millner's 824 and 2193 (p. 220).

[2] Portland MSS., iv., 500.

defended. All Berwick could do was to rally such fugitives as he could at Lille and Tournai and await with anxiety his infantry's arrival.[1]

Marlborough meanwhile had moved his main body to Wervicq on the Lys (July 4th/15th). He wrote to Godolphin. "This country lies all open to us but for want of cannon we are not able to do anything considerable. That which hinders us from acting with vigour is that as long as the French are masters of Ghent we cannot make use either of the Scheldt or the Lys."[2] Vendôme had indeed done something to redeem the disaster of Oudenarde by the direction he had given to his retreat. But if Vendôme's refuge behind the Ghent-Bruges canal denied the Allies the waterways of West Flanders for transport purposes and was so strong that Marlborough declared he could not be forced from it "but by famine," the Duke was quick to see that the French position had its drawbacks; "they leave all France open to us," he wrote, "which is what I flatter myself the King of France will never suffer." Marlborough's plan was certainly calculated to cause Vendôme's instant recall to France. He intended nothing less than an immediate advance into France. He was prepared to leave the frontier fortresses untaken, Lille itself he would merely have masked, and to move boldly into French territory. This was what Wellington and Blücher did after Waterloo, and it shows Marlborough at his greatest. None of his contemporaries could have freed himself so completely from the trammels of the conventional strategy of the day—even Eugene was aghast at his temerity—or could have

[1] *Mémoires*, ii., 115–6.

[2] July 8th/19th.

realized so clearly the limitations of fortresses. Marlborough saw that no fortress could command more than the country within range of its guns, that the network of strong places which covered the French frontier locked up and immobilized thousands of troops, and that once he were past Lille and Tournai and on the march through Artois only a field army could stop him. That the project involved considerable risks he did not overlook, but in the fertile districts into which he proposed to march supplies in plenty could be requisitioned and to utilize to the full the advantages of England's naval superiority was the very basis of his plan. A force of several thousand men under General Erle was at the moment being prepared in England for a descent on the French coast and Marlborough proposed to co-operate with this detachment. "Though their number is not great," he wrote, "they will much alarm the coast." What the Duke contemplated was to possess himself of a port on the Channel which would serve as a new base. Such a move would have anticipated that to Corunna by which Moore baffled Napoleon, as also Wellington's celebrated change of base from Lisbon to Santander in 1813, and have given a fine example of the flexibility which command of the sea confers on armies. A letter of Marlborough's to Halifax[1] throws valuable light on the project. "Your notion of entering France," he writes, "agrees very well with my own inclinations and were our army all composed of English the project would certainly be feasible but we have a great many among us who are more afraid of wanting provisions than of the enemy." Whether Eugene was among the "great

[1] Disp., iv., 129.

many" is not clear but it was the opposition of Marlborough's colleague which was fatal; "he thinks it impracticable till we have Lille for a place d'armes and magazine," the Duke wrote, "and then he thinks we may make a very great inroad but not be able to winter, though we might be helped by the fleet, unless we are the masters of some fortified town." Eugene's reluctance to agree to Marlborough's daring project was natural enough but it does just mark the difference between these two celebrated brothers-in-arms. Eugene had courage, energy, tactical skill, and great administrative capacity, but he just lacked that "something inexpressible" which Vaudemont had many years ago detected in the Earl of Marlborough and which shines out clearly in this daring scheme. With Marlborough at the gates of Arras, Louis would never have allowed Vendôme to remain at Ghent; with the Allies on the road to Amiens the French must have denuded the frontier fortresses of every available man and left them thereby a relatively easy prey to such Allied forces as had been left to secure the Netherlands. It is not on what he plans but on what he actually carries out that a general's fame must mainly rest; "in war the simple is very difficult" and the finest and most brilliant designs which have never passed from the stage of planning into that of execution are valuable chiefly as indications of what a commander has hoped to accomplish and has considered practicable, but in Marlborough's whole military career this proposal is the most daring, the most original, and the most interesting of all his unfulfilled projects.

But if he could not persuade Eugene into an advance

into Artois Marlborough had no intention of being checkmated by Vendôme's control of the navigation of Western Flanders. If guns could not move by water, they should come by road, and Marlborough promptly began arranging to fetch artillery from Holland, and to collect the transport wanted to move the vast train required for the siege of "Vauban's masterpiece," Lille. While the train was being collected, every horse that could be spared from the army was sent off to Brussels—"general officers and others, to show their zeal" vied with one another "to furnish all the horses and wagons they can spare"—at the same time extensive raids into French territory resulted in the requisitioning of considerable supplies and kept the French in constant alarm.[1]

To conceal from the French the projected attack on Lille and to ensure the safe movement of the battering train was Marlborough's immediate object. He wrote on July 12th/23rd

> I cannot think the court of France will suffer the Duke of Vendôme's army to continue where they are, as soon as they shall know we have a possibility of getting cannon, for by intercepted letters we find that both in France, as well as in the Duke's army, they think it impossible for us to get a battering train.

By this time Eugene's troops from the Moselle, 43 squadrons and 18 battalions, were at Brussels, and ready to escort the all-important convoy which amounted to 100 guns, 60 mortars, and 3000 waggons with 16,000 horses and occupied no less than fifteen

[1] Disp., iv., 126, 129, 131, 136.

miles of road space. To assist in this difficult task Marlborough detached 40 squadrons and 24 battalions under Lottum, remaining with the rest of his force at Wervicq.

On July 26th/August 6th the convoy started on its seventy-five-miles' journey from Brussels, making first for Soignies. Vendôme was still lying behind the Bruges-Ghent canal but he had pushed a detachment under Albergotti forward towards Alost, apparently with the idea of making a dash at Brussels should the Allies leave that town weakly garrisoned. However Marlborough, alive to the importance of safe-guarding the Belgian capital, had had the weak places in its defences made good and arranged for a sufficient garrison.[1] But it was not from Vendôme, whose army was still far from recovering from the effects of Oudenarde, that the convoy had most to fear. Berwick, who had moved from Douai to Mons, was known to have "his eye on our artillery." Fortunately for the Allies, however, Berwick could not get Vendôme to agree to any of his proposals; Vendôme would neither leave Ghent to combine with Berwick in intercepting the convoy on the Dender, nor would he hear of a joint counter-stroke against Brussels,[2] and while the French commanders were arguing the great train of guns and waggons was rolling slowly but steadily towards safety. On July 28th/August 8th it was at Ath, two days later it was on the Scheldt, while Wood with thirty of Marlborough's squadrons moved out towards Oudenarde and effectually covered it from Albergotti who had shifted to Ninove but came no nearer. At the same time forty-

[1] Disp. iv., 151, 154.

[2] Berwick's *Mémoires*, II., 117.

four squadrons and thirty battalions from Marlborough's army under the Prince of Orange, took the first step towards investing Lille by surprising one of its chief outworks, Marquette Abbey (July 31st/August 11th). The gallantry of a British sergeant, Littler of the 16th Foot, who swam the river and let down a drawbridge enabled Orange to secure the passage and to take post next day North-West of the city. Meanwhile the great convoy had pursued its way and on August 1st/12th joined Marlborough at Helchin without the loss of a gun or waggon. This success put great heart into the Allies and surprised and discouraged the French.[1] Berwick had felt himself too weak to try conclusions with the escort and was extremely annoyed with Vendôme; the latter put the blame for his inactivity on Burgundy and his complaints are supported by St. Simon, no friendly witness usually where Vendôme is concerned.

Lille, the chief city of French Flanders, was not in 1708 the centre of the densely populated industrial district which was to undergo four years of Prussian occupation between 1914–1918, but it was a place of considerable importance, its fortifications were strong, its garrison numerous, and its commander the famous veteran Boufflers. The town lay on the banks of the Deule and was roughly pear-shaped, narrowing at the Northern end, with the citadel, a fine specimen of the art of fortification, on the Western Side. South-Westward from Lille run the gentle slopes familiar in modern days as the Aubers Ridge, acting as a watershed between the Deule and the Lys; South of the city the

[1] Hare, p. 219.

country between the Deule and its tributary the Marque was studded with villages but was fairly open, while to the East the Marque passes round the city at a distance of some three to four miles, to join the Deule just North of the town, providing the besiegers with an obstacle likely to be useful in keeping relieving forces at a distance. The actual siege was intrusted to Eugene, reinforced by a strong detachment from Marlborough's army including five British battalions[1]; the bulk of the British the Duke, however, kept with him, "relying and depending mostly on them as the best troops."[2] To cover the siege Marlborough with 137 squadrons and 83 battalions took post near Helchin to the North-East of the city.

The reduction of Lille, in itself a formidable undertaking, was rendered additionally arduous by the presence in the field of the armies under Berwick and Vendôme which between them considerably exceeded the covering force.[3] However, the want of accord between the French commanders had been [illegible] the Allies to agree to any their failure to intercept Eugene [illegible] ave Ghent question of precedence was a specia[illegible] was [illegible] voy on tween Berwick and Vendôme, who agree[illegible] troke liking Burgundy and went on wrangling over [illegible] rs method of helping Lille. Berwick first proposed [illegible] version against Brussels, the others would not agree an[illegible] Louis sent orders for a more direct method of relief. Then Berwick proposed that Vendôme should engage

[1] The 16th, 18th, 21st, 23rd, and 24th Foot.

[2] Portland MSS., iv., 502.

[3] The estimates vary as usual but Millner's figure, 240 squadrons and 136 battalions (p. 230) may be accepted as approximately correct.

the covering army while he himself broke through Eugene's lines of circumvallation.[1] Vendôme would not hear of this and finally prevailed on Burgundy to send direct orders to Berwick for a junction between the two armies. Not till August 16th/27th did Vendôme quit Ghent, and even then his progress was not rapid. On August 19th/30th the junction with Berwick was effected between Lessines and Grammont, whence the whole force advanced to Tournai (August 21st/September 1st) and crossing the Scheldt came next day (August 22nd/September 2nd) to Blandain.

While the French commanders had been arguing and moving somewhat leisurely forward the besiegers had pressed the construction of the lines of circumvallation so vigorously that by August 9th/20th Marlborough wrote,[2] "we are at liberty to draw off a considerable strength from the siege to reinforce our army." Three days earlier the artillery for the siege, 120 heavy guns, 20 howitzers, 40 large mortars, had reached the lines, and at seven in the morning of August 16th/27th, in Millner's words, "the batteries began to play and played very vigorous and furious against the main wall of the city." Unfortunately they had been sited "at too great a distance from the walls" so that a considerable time elapsed before there was "any great impression made thereon." However, the engineers were sanguine of taking the town in ten days or so. Marlborough wrote to Godolphin "whatever M. de Vendôme intends for the relief of that town he must not lose much time."

On hearing that Vendôme was on the move and making for Tournai, Marlborough at once recrossed the

[1] *Mém.*, ii., 120, 122. [2] Disp., iv., 177.

Scheldt from Helchin on August 19th/30th, moving to Templeuve next day, and on the following morning (August 21st/September 1st) shifted again to a position behind the Marque. His left at Anstaing and Pont-à-Tressin lay across the Tournai-Lille road, and his right stretched as far as the Douai road; he was thus well posted to check an advance either direct from Tournai or from the South should the French move round to that quarter. A "running trench" had been hastily "cast up in the front of the army with several batteries thereon,"[1] but the Duke and the whole army desired nothing more than that the French should attack.

But Vendôme and Berwick were as far as ever from agreeing. Berwick was for attempting a direct attack on Pont-à-Tressin,[2] Vendôme for working round to the South to attack by the Douai road, in which direction they did finally move. Marlborough thereupon merely side-stepped to his right, so that when on August 25th/September 5th the French pushed forward it was to find the Allies firmly planted across their path from the marshes of the Marque near Frétin to Noyelles lez Seclin near the Deule. Vendôme would have attacked but Berwick refused, arguing that Marlborough's position was not only so chosen that marshes restricted the approaches, but that any troops who reached the drier ground which opened out beyond could be counter-attacked at a disadvantage, since their supports must be delayed by the narrowness of the approaches.[3] Vendôme could not but recognize that there was "no ardour in his troops to the attack" (Parker) and after an ineffectual cannonade the French drew off. Marlborough

[1] Millner, p. 230. [2] *Mémoires*, ii., 123. [3] *Ibid.*, ii., 124.

wrote on August 27th/September 7th that the French had declined two fair opportunities for battle and added that the next time they felt like striking they would find the Allies harder to approach. Once again the French under pressure from Versailles[1] advanced to attack. They crossed the Marque (August 31st/September 11th) and moved to Phalempin and Seclin on the Lens road, and, bringing forward their guns, bombarded for some time an advanced post at Ennetières in the centre of the Allies' line, which was stoutly defended by Evans's British brigade. However, the more they reconnoitred the less they liked the prospect and, "after cannonading us so long and to no purpose" (Hare), began on September 4th/15th to withdraw without putting their chances to the test of an attack. On the following day they recrossed the Scheldt and encamped. Marlborough yearned to venture a counter-attack but the Dutch Deputies were against it. It was clear there would be no direct attempt to raise the siege. The memory of Oudenarde was a sufficient deterrent. Deane perhaps expressed the army's feelings most accurately: "We might wait till Doomsday for the enemy to advance. We are continually fatigued and bug-beared out of our lives by those who had as much will to fight as to be hanged."

But meantime the siege went none too well. The defences proved formidable indeed. One of Mar's correspondents, a subaltern in the Scots Fusiliers, wrote from the trenches:

These outworks are so large and numerous that whatever way we make our approaches, notwithstanding of all our

[1] Berwick, ii., 126.

boyous, blinds, and angles, we are always flanked and our men very often kild both with small and cannon shot at the very bottom of the trench. The enimy having a very strong garrisson and defends vigorously hitherto have disputed inch by inch.[1]

Hare blamed the engineers: "If our engineers had been good for anything it had been over before this," he wrote the day after the French recrossed the Scheldt. Other authorities, Stair among them, concur in criticizing the unfortunate engineers. The mistake made in siting the first batteries too far from the walls proved costly in ammunition, and an assault on the counterscarp made on August 27th/September 7th proved costly and only partially successful. Moreover, the French advance against Seclin and Phalempin caused Eugene to suspend active siege operations to support the covering force. A fresh effort followed his return and on September 6th/17th the attackers improved their position considerably and could now bring fresh batteries to bear against the main defences. But the ammunition expenditure had been prodigious; on September 9th/20th Marlborough wrote: "We have already fired very near as much as was demanded for the taking of the town and citadel and as yet we are not entire masters of the counterscarp." That evening a renewed attack between the St. Andrew and Madeleine Gates, for which the besiegers were specially reinforced by five thousand British from the covering force, resulted after a most bitter struggle,[2] in a fresh lodgment,

[1] Lieutenant William Nodding, Mar. MSS, p. 464.

[2] Cf. *The Remembrance*, p. 483.

purchased at the price of a thousand casualties, among them Eugene himself who, exposing himself with his usual reckless intrepidity, was wounded, fortunately not severely, in the head. This added to Marlborough's burden, as in Eugene's absence he had to assume immediate direction of the siege himself.

What made the ammunition-shortage more serious was that the French were now posted across the line of communications with Brussels and the passage of the besiegers' convoys of stores and provisions was interrupted, while not even to reopen the road to Brussels could the covering army venture on attacking Vendôme's superior numbers

But Marlborough was not easily baffled. Erle's expedition had been cruising the Channel for weeks without effecting anything. Erle had been on the point of landing in La Hogue Bay but the sight of some tents and militia had deterred him; driven off the French coast by storms he had finally run into the Downs. Marlborough was far from ill-pleased at this: he had pointed out (August 30th/September 10th) that the season was too far advanced to send Erle to Portugal, and he now seized the opportunity of having Erle's detachment disembarked at Ostend to assist in securing the communications between that port and the besiegers of Lille. Erle was soon busy. He occupied Oudenberg, drained an inundation between Ostend and Nieuport, and established a post and bridges over the Nieuport-Bruges canal at Leffinghen. Meanwhile seven hundred waggons had been collected at Ostend and on September 16th/27th this convoy started on its march, escorted

by twelve battalions. The French were naturally eager to prevent the arrival of this all-important convoy and to this end Berwick sent off sixty squadrons and thirty-four battalions under De la Motte. But from his camp East of the Scheldt De la Motte had to follow a circuitous route and Marlborough, warned betimes, could take ample measures for the convoy's protection, dispatching twelve battalions under General Webb to Thorout, another twelve with twenty-six squadrons under Cadogan to Roulers. The first attempt to interfere with the convoy was foiled by the successful resistance of Erle's posts at Oudenberg and Leffinghen and when De la Motte on September 17th/28th advanced on Wynendael, fifteen miles from Ostend and on the Menin road, expecting to catch the convoy there he found his path barred by Webb.

The action which followed was a conspicuous triumph for Webb, and his little force.[1] Webb's skilful choice of position with both flanks covered by woods neutralized the French superiority in numbers by narrowing the front on which they could attack,[2] the steadiness with which his men endured a heavy cannonade and the excellence of their fire-discipline were both conspicuous, and the intervention at a critical moment of two battalions whom he had hidden in the woods which flanked the French line of advance was a notable factor in a valuable and creditable victory. De la

[1] The only British regiments known to have been present are the Royal Scots (cf. *The Remembrance*) and the Cameronians, whose presence is proved by an article on the Master of Sinclair in the *Scottish Historical Review*, xiv.

[2] Mar. MSS., p. 463.

Motte finally drew off "in great precipitation" (Kane), leaving all his guns behind and having suffered nearly four thousand casualties, four times the Allies' loss.[1]

Webb's success was certainly of great importance. While Webb had been stoutly maintaining the pass against superior numbers the convoy had been lumbering on to safety and reached Roulers that evening: two days later to the Duke's immense relief, for there was but ammunition enough for four days, it came safely into Marlborough's camp. "If our convoy had been lost," he told Godolphin, "the consequence must have been the rising of the siege." Moreover the general effects of Wynendael were considerable. One of the French Foreign Minister's correspondents wrote to him:[2]

The last action at Weinendahl is considered here more important in its consequence than the battle of Oudenarde, and as the Allies were a third weaker than the French it increased the courage of the former and the States now

[1] *Cf.* Millner, p. 235. Marlborough wrote: "The success of the action must be attributed chiefly to your good conduct and resolution. You may assure yourself I shall do you justice at home and be glad on all occasions to own the service you have done in securing the convoy, upon which the success of our siege so much depended. "The story, given prominence by Thackeray in a dramatic passage in *Esmond*, that Marlborough ascribed all the credit for Wynendael to his favourite Cadogan, whose cavalry arrived just as the action was over, has just this much justification that Marlborough's first dispatch did give Cadogan the credit. A subsequent account published in the Gazette of September 23d/October 4th, however, did ample justice to Webb who appears to have complained to the Duke (Disp., iv., 242), for Marlborough's letter to Sunderland (Disp., iv., 247) and several other letters (*cf.* Coxe, ii., 323–4) fully disprove the accusation that he never recognized Webb's merits.

[2] Petkum to Torcy, Round MSS., p. 331.

blame their Deputies for preventing the Generals from attacking the French army before Lille. Their confidence is now so great that they have ordered their Deputies to forbid no battles when the Generals are agreed upon them.

The effects of the convoy's arrival were soon seen. Already on September 18th/29th a renewed attack had given the besiegers "most of the outworks that were of consequence;"[1] on September 20th/October 1st the Allies were "in possession of all the counterscarp, though with the loss of much blood, it having stud three several attackes,"[2] and two days later an attack, in which the Royal Scots distinguished themselves, carried an important bastion known as "the Cat."[3] This success led to the capture of several adjacent works after which it became possible to drain off the water in the moat and expose the base of the main wall to the besiegers' cannon. Under their steady fire a breach soon appeared in the city wall and Boufflers's situation was now so desperate that Vendôme was aroused to activity. The scheme he now adopted might have proved effective if tried earlier, but it came too late. Marching round by Ghent to Oudenberg, Vendôme cut the dykes between Bruges and Nieuport whereby a wide district was inundated and communications with Ostend through Leffinghen were greatly impeded.[4] A new convoy which had just left Ostend had to return to Ostend but the resourceful Cadogan rose to the occasion and provided flat-boats in which the supplies, taken by waggons

[1] Deane, p. 25. [2] Mar. MSS., p 464.
[3] "Katte" in Flemish signifies a bastion covering a gateway.
[4] Disp., iv., 253.

from Ostend to Leffinghen, were carried thence across the floods to meet the waggons from the army. "This is troublesome," wrote Stair, "but it will do"[1] Vendôme was not beaten yet: he organized a flotilla of galleys and row-boats which established a local superiority on the inundations,[2] and he besieged Leffinghen which after holding out well for ten days was then forced to surrender. But the Allies had succeeded in getting a couple of convoys in before communications were cut, and the 1700 barrels of powder thus provided supplied the wherewithal for continuing the bombardment; moreover, forage was fortunately abundant and requisitioning parties collected corn from the country round, while for the moment the bread ration was cut down by a third, six men receiving the rations for four with a money equivalent of the reduction.[3]

By October 11th/22nd a practicable breach had been made, and all was in tune for the assault when Boufflers beat a parley. He was not yet prepared to surrender altogether but only capitulated for the city, being allowed to retire into the citadel with his remaining effectives, his sick and wounded receiving free passage to Douai. The besiegers promptly occupied the town and began their preparations for reducing the citadel, undeterred by "the indifferent plenty" to which they were reduced by the cutting of their communications.[4] Vigorous measures were taken to collect supplies. Foragers pushed out boldly into French territory. Stair wrote with satisfaction of the convenient supplies round Armentières, "an excellent country, all the en-

[1] Mar. MSS, p. 466.
[2] *Cf.* Disp., iv., 269.
[3] Disp., iv., 264.
[4] Millner, p. 241.

emy's, where there has not been one truss made this war."[1] La Bassée and Lens were occupied to protect the parties requisitioning in Artois,[2] and meanwhile batteries were established on the glacis of the citadel, all the sorties of the besieged being repulsed with loss. It was already past the normal campaigning season, but the weather was unusually fine for November and operations could be carried on with little hindrance from wet or mud. Lille was clearly doomed unless the French field army could do something more effective than cut the communications of generals whom this inconvenience failed to distract. Berwick had obtained leave to return to Alsace on account of his continual disagreements with Vendôme, but the Elector of Bavaria had collected fifteen thousand men at Mons and appearing suddenly before Brussels on November 11th/22nd proceeded to lay siege to that city, held by barely seven thousand men. Fortunately in General Paschal Brussels had a stout-hearted commandant and Marlborough was not slow to come to his relief.

Marlborough and Eugene were faced by no easy task. Between them and Brussels lay the Scheldt and Dender and the French positions behind these rivers had been well fortified so that the chances of success in a direct attack seemed poor. Marlborough therefore made preparations at Menin and Courtrai which seemed to point to a move round by Ghent. His real design was very different. Moving North-East from his camp near Harlebeck to Courtrai on November 14th/25th he suddenly turned right-handed next evening and advanced straight for the Scheldt in several columns.

[1] *Annals*, i., 237. [2] Brodrick, p. 265.

Eugene on the right moved through Roubaix as though to cross between Hauterive and Escaneffe. Cadogan proceeding ahead of the main body under Marlborough himself made for Kirckhoff, Lottum with a strong column advanced on Gavre lower down the river. A night march followed by an early morning fog coupled with the defenders' over-sanguine confidence in their position resulted in an easy success. Lottum and Cadogan surprised the French completely, catching them shamefully off their guard—at one point the outposts were actually asleep[1]—and after a poor resistance the French fell back, some on Ghent, others on Mons and Tournai, in considerable confusion. De la Motte on their right only avoided battle by abandoning his guns to Lottum, and Marlborough keeping close on Cadogan's heels pressed on to Oudenarde "where the enemy's greatest strength lay." But M. de Hautefort who commanded here had no zeal for a fight and made off forthwith, his baggage and a thousand prisoners falling into the clutches of his pursuers. The line of the Scheldt thus broken with unexpected ease no more opposition was encountered. A forced march of some eight leagues, "accomplished with great willingness" (Deane), brought Marlborough and the Guards to Alost on November 17th/28th: here news met them that the Elector had decamped from Brussels directly he heard of the passage of the Scheldt; indeed he had gone so hastily that he had left his guns and eight hundred wounded behind, "the leaving of which," Marlborough wrote to Godolphin, "is most scandalous and must be a great mortification to the Elector."

[1] Kane, p. 81; *cf.* Disp., IV., 346.

The French were much annoyed at this rebuff,[1] and their mortification was increased when on November 28th/December 9th Boufflers had at last to surrender the citadel of Lille. Eugene had gone back to resume the siege directly the Scheldt was crossed, and pressed operations so hard that Boufflers could hold out no longer. On November 29th/December 10th the seven thousand survivors of his garrison marched out with the honours of war. The siege had been most costly, it had involved the Allies in over fifteen thousand casualties, the five British battalions having suffered quite out of all proportion to their numbers, 404 killed and 1136 wounded (Millner, p. 249), and Deane writes:

> this murdring siege has destroyed more than Namur did last war and those that were the flower of the Army, for what was not killed or wounded were spoiled by their hellish inventions of throwing of bombs, boiling pitch, tar, oil and brimstone with scalding water and such like combustibles from the outworks and when our men made any attack. Likewise many other inventions enough to puzzle the Devil to contrive.

But the importance of the fall of Lille was great, both material and moral, and the determination and resource with which the siege had been pressed under such difficulties against a resolute and skilful resistance and in the presence of the large field force under Vendôme and Berwick mark the achievement as one of special merit. If the honours of the actual siege are Eugene's the credit for warding off the relieving forces, for foiling their various attempts to hinder the siege operations,

[1] Disp., iv., 346.

belongs no less to Marlborough It adds to his credit that his health had been far from good. In October he had written of suffering from a severe cold and from a fall from his horse; at the passage of the Scheldt he had been so ill that he had to be carried in a litter at night, though by day his indomitable will had enabled him to direct operations from the saddle.[1]

The capture of Lille so late in the year would have satisfied most commanders, but not Marlborough. He was set on rounding off the campaign by recovering all that treachery had handed over to the French earlier in the year. As Stair wrote[2] it would hardly be possible to disperse the Allied army into winter-quarters if those towns remained in French hands but the army would have "to subsist cantonn'd in this country," especially as with Tournai also in French possession the position of Oudenarde would be precarious Vendôme, indeed, realizing that if the Allied army could not disperse into winter-quarters and had to keep the field it would be ruined, had besought permission to remain between Ghent and Bruges, although the country had been "entirely eaten up."[3] But though, in the words of Vendôme's colleague and rival Berwick, Louis had fallen in with many unwise projects of Vendôme's, he rejected this, his only reasonable suggestion: Vendôme withdrew accordingly into France by Nieuport, leaving the protection of Ghent and Bruges to twenty thousand men under De la Motte.

Anxiety to secure these towns had partly accounted for the favourable terms granted to Boufflers, and on the

[1] Disp., iv., 285, 324.
[2] Mar. MSS., p. 468.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 467.

very day that Marshal beat a parley the Duke wrote to Eugene,[1] "we must have Ghent and Bruges, let it cost what it will." Fortunately, though the roads were bad and supplies difficult to obtain, the weather remained unusually favourable and to the surprise of both friends and foes Marlborough undertook the venture. Directly Lille fell he began preparations to attack Ghent, weakened though many of his regiments were. On December 7th/18th the besieging troops took post before Ghent and six days later the trenches were opened. Open weather continued long enough to let batteries be thrown up and then a sudden turn to winter froze the ditches and made it easier for the assailants to reach the walls (Millner, p. 253). Dismayed by this De la Motte offered to negotiate, and on December 22nd/January 2nd the garrison, nineteen squadrons and thirty-four battalions, marched out for France. The fall of Ghent was followed by the evacuation of Bruges, while Leffinghen and Plassendael were also abandoned by their garrisons who retired into France, thus completing the recovery by the Allies of all they had lost. Marlborough might account himself fortunate. The frost that had set in proved unwontedly severe, the worst weather in the memory of the inhabitants of that country; indeed, but for De la Motte's speedy surrender the siege must have been raised,[2] as it was some of the besiegers had already been frozen to death. Marlborough wrote with surprise of the readiness of so strong a garrison to surrender so tamely; "the works I find in so good a condition that they might have given us much more trouble," but his satisfaction was great: "I cannot

[1] Disp., iv., 344.

[2] Berwick, ii, 141.

express enough to you the importance of these two towns," he told Godolphin, "without them we can neither be quiet in our winter quarters or open with advantage the next campaign." (December 23rd/January 3rd.)

CHAPTER XVI

NEGOTIATIONS

MARLBOROUGH'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH BERWICK—TORCY AT THE HAGUE—MARLBOROUGH AND PEACE—THE RUPTURE—VILLARS IN COMMAND—THE LA BASSÉE LINES—TOURNAI BESIEGED AND TAKEN—THE MARCH ON MONS.

THE straits to which the campaign of 1708 had reduced the French are made manifest in the negotiations which followed its close. As already mentioned (*cf.* p. 306) Ramillies had induced Louis to make overtures to the States-General which Marlborough had summarily suppressed. It seems that at that time an attempt was made through the Marquis d'Allegre to bribe Marlborough to advocate peace but that the Duke had rejected the suggestion.[1] Since 1706 much had happened: in Spain itself the Allies had lost ground, but the seal had been set on the expulsion of the French from Italy by a treaty between the Emperor and the Pope (January, 1709), the latter recognizing the Archduke as Charles III. Further, during 1708 the Allied fleet had easily effected two important gains in the Mediterranean. In August it had conveyed to Sardinia an expedition under Count Stahremberg to which the island capitulated almost without resistance. Proceeding to Minorca, it encountered more strenuous opposition. However, by the end of September this had been overcome and Port Mahon, in those days

[1] *Cf.* Torcy's *Mémoires* and *Succession d'Espagne*, iv., 368 and 404.

reputed the best harbour in the Mediterranean, was in Admiral Leake's hands. This expedition had been undertaken largely at Marlborough's insistence. After the failure at Toulon he had resolved to secure a good winter port for the Allied squadron, and had written to Stanhope, the English commander in Spain, "I conjure you if possible to take Port Mahon,"[1] but, keen as he was on securing Minorca, he was prepared to defer on a naval question to the sailors. He wrote to Wratislaw to that effect, declaring that the decision must rest with those conversant with the technical difficulties.[2] Unlike Napoleon, Marlborough was not in the habit of demanding from sailors the accomplishment of the impossible.

Minorca once taken Marlborough was most anxious to see its uses fully developed and insisted on the prompt dispatch of the equipment needed for the dockyard. Stanhope had written home to urge that England should not part with an island which would "give the law to the Mediterranean both in war and in peace." Marlborough needed no convincing on this point but he warned Stanhope "it is a very ticklish point and will need your greatest prudence . . . for as soon as it is known, I expect to hear loudly of it from Holland."[3] Dutch commercial jealousy of England was certainly much accentuated by seeing England established at Minorca, and when in the autumn of 1709 the "Barrier Treaty" was under negotiation compensation for Minorca afforded the Dutch a most useful argument. For the moment, however, more important negotiations were on foot.

[1] Disp., iv., 107. [2] *V. s.*, p. 41. [3] Disp., iv., 409.

The Duke of Schleswig-Holstein was at this time represented at The Hague by a certain Petkum, well described by Mr. Leadam[1] as "a well-meaning political busybody." As early as January, 1707, Petkum had with Heinsius's cognizance been in communication with Torcy. Heinsius had seen in this correspondence[2] a means of keeping himself informed of the sentiments of the Court of Versailles. The Grand Pensionary himself, Petkum wrote in September, 1708, was quite eager for peace but would do nothing without Marlborough. Some of those in the Duke's confidence even alleged that he too was favourably disposed but of this Petkum himself was sceptical. He would have been not a little disturbed had he known that at the very moment he arrived at The Hague the Duke was corresponding with Berwick on the subject of peace.

That Marlborough should have been far from averse to peace is easy to understand. One main object of the Grand Alliance had been practically attained, for the power of France for aggression had been crippled. Moreover his own position at home had not improved. The breach with Harley and St. John had left the ministry almost purely Whig and the death of Prince George of Denmark had not only deprived Marlborough of a firm supporter and of a hold on the Queen, more valuable now that Mrs. Masham had completely supplanted the Duchess, but had been followed by the

[1] *Political History of England*, ix., 146.

[2] This correspondence is to be found in the Round MSS. (*Historical MSS. Commission; App. 9 to 14th Report*), and is a valuable source of evidence.

admission of more Whigs to office, notably Somers who became President of the Council. Marlborough and Godolphin thus found themselves more than ever dependent on a party for whom they had little trust just when the Duke had practically lost his hold on the Queen's personal favour. Meanwhile the Tories were beginning to rally, to profit by the growing weariness of the nation under the strain of the necessary war taxation and by the hostility provoked by the measures employed to provide recruits. As early as 1703 an Act had been passed for the forcible enlistment of able-bodied men without visible means of support and its enforcement had caused much trouble[1]: further, in 1708 Walpole had suggested adopting the French system by which each parish was responsible for producing a fixed quota of men, if necessary by compulsion. Harley and St. John, therefore, relying on influencing the Queen through Mrs. Masham, were ready to take advantage of anything and there is no reason whatever to doubt Marlborough's sincerity when he wrote to Godolphin in February, 1709: "Peace which upon all accounts I long for, being extremely weary of the life I am obliged to live, for my spirit is so broke that I am become fit for nothing else but a lazy and quiet life." At that moment he and Eugene were meeting with more than the usual troubles over the arrangements, military and diplomatic, for the coming campaign. It is equally improbable that he was not sincerely anxious for peace when in the previous autumn he had been engaged in correspondence with Berwick. Valuable light has been thrown on this correspondence by the publication in

[1] *Cf.* Disp., IV., 289, for an example from Gloucestershire.

1893 of important papers from the French archives by M. Legrelle.[1]

That Marlborough had been in occasional communication with his nephew, even before the autumn of 1708, is proved by documents of April 8, 1703, and of March 15, 1705, discovered by M. Legrelle. That author's opinion is that Marlborough's motive in this correspondence was to obtain information of value through the Court of St. Germains. A simpler and more probable motive is that he was at the old game of hedging, of securing himself in the event of a restoration by vague promises and professions which cost him nothing. The exact circumstances under which communications were renewed in 1708 are uncertain. Apparently the first overture came from Berwick as the first letter from Marlborough, forwarded by Berwick to Torcy on August 14th/25th, is a reply to one of Berwick's. In this the Duke declared "no one in the world longs more sincerely for peace than I do. But the peace must be sound and durable and in accordance with my country's interests." He went on to urge that the first overtures should be made by France to Holland. Berwick, however, declared that as the King had already made advances several times it was for Holland to move now. This, Marlborough answered, Holland could not do without getting the consent of her allies and therewith for the time communications were broken off. It may be noticed that when this happened, in the middle of September, the siege was going none too well, which hardly bears out M Legrelle's theory that Marl-

[1] Cf. *Une Négociation inconnue entre Berwick et Marlborough, 1708–1709.*

borough's object was merely to gain time, while that negotiations should have been renewed by him just after the town had surrendered makes it even more unlikely that they were a mere ruse.

In Marlborough's letter to Berwick of October 19th/30th, he again expressed his opinion that the moment was favourable for overtures and that if the French government would make suggestions to the Dutch Deputies, to Eugene and to himself, which they could communicate to their governments it would produce such an effect in Holland that peace would probably result. It cannot be denied that the Duke went on to add that should his endeavours lead to peace he had no doubt he would "receive the proofs of friendship" promised two years previously by the Marquis d'Allegre (*cf.* p. 368). The offer of 1706 Marlborough had rejected but there is no getting over this definite intimation that he would be prepared to accept payment from his adversaries. All that can be said for him is that in 1709 peace would not have been premature, as it would have been in 1706 when France had not yet been deprived of her power to trouble Europe. By 1708, after Oudenarde and with Lille on the point of falling, France could no longer hold out for terms which England could not safely accept. Once again Marlborough did nothing actually detrimental to his country's interests, his conduct was certainly less open to censure on this score than was the action of the Tories in 1712, but the episode shows him at his worst.

But in the end nothing came of the overture. Berwick was convinced of his uncle's sincerity. Burgundy and Torcy were sufficiently so to be prepared to treat

his proposal as genuine. Chamillart, however, took the opposite view and as the drafting of a reply to Marlborough's letter fell to him it is hardly surprising that the negotiations proved abortive. After stating quite plainly that Marlborough's motives for the suggestion were to be found in his desire to escape from a situation he knew to be precarious, Chamillart went on to hint that France would expect the evacuation of French territory and the restoration of Lille as the conditions of an armistice. Marlborough, though annoyed at Chamillart's want of faith in him, did not immediately break off the correspondence but wrote again later suggesting the employment of certain intermediaries. But the particular agent he suggested was not acceptable to Louis who had already given orders to M. Bergeyck, the Spanish Intendant of the Netherlands, to open communications with Van der Dussen, a member of the Secret Council at The Hague.

These communications resulted from the machinations of the indefatigable Petkum and when in January, 1709, Marlborough arrived at The Hague they were well advanced. The Dutch negotiators immediately informed Marlborough of what had been done, adding that it would be useless to proceed further without knowing his views. The Duke declared himself ready to transmit the proposals to Godolphin, but he laid down as indispensable preliminaries to a conference that France should agree to the cession of Spain with the Indies and must give the Dutch a satisfactory "barrier."[1]

This readiness to treat, however, did not involve

[1] *Cf.* Round MSS., pp. 335–336.

any relaxation of precautions. Godolphin, believing the French preparations for the next campaign mere bluff, would have begun reductions and economies at once. Marlborough took a very different view: "I am far from thinking the King of France so low as he is thought in England," he wrote: the French, he explained, were doing everything possible to be strong in the Netherlands, "reinforcing themselves from all parts, even from Spain," and recalling fifty squadrons and as many battalions from the Rhine and Dauphiné.[1] Stair too had written in October,[2] "there is no manner of doubt the French will bring all the troops they have in the world hither this winter." Louis was concentrating on the decisive front and Marlborough, suspecting that his motive in negotiating was merely to sow dissension among the Allies, hastened back from England to the Netherlands a month earlier than he had intended.

However, when negotiations were opened in earnest by the arrival in Holland of Rouillé, the President of the Parlement de Paris, the sincerity of the French was indisputable: the words "Blenheim," "Ramillies," and "Lille" could clearly be read between the lines of their proposals. Rouillé was empowered to leave Spain and the Indies and the Milanese to the Archduke, if only Philip might have the Two Sicilies, to restore the Netherlands to the footing arranged in 1697, and to hand over in addition Menin and Ypres and even Condé and Furnes.[3] His proposals were flatly declared inadmissible. Marlborough, with whom was associated as representative of England Townshend, a rising young

[1] Disp., iv., 398; *cf.* 401.
[2] *Annals*, i., 240.
[3] *Cf.* Torcy, i., 169.

Whig peer, had instructions to insist absolutely upon the whole Spanish inheritance for the House of Austria, together with the dismantling of Dunkirk, the guarantee of the Protestant succession in England, and the expulsion of the "Old Pretender" from France. Such vigorous demands surprised Heinsius, though the Dutch ideas about a "barrier" were hardly less exacting and showed a tendency to stiffen; he declared the French would never accept them. Marlborough thought otherwise and the event proved him right. Rouillé protested, referred back to Versailles and then, when Torcy himself arrived to assist in the negotiations,[1] these conditions were accepted. Torcy by his own account hoped to satisfy Holland over the barrier and England by dismantling Dunkirk and that, this done, the other Allies would have to give way. But before anything else he made an effort to bribe Marlborough. According to his own version he offered two million livres if he could obtain the Two Sicilies or even Naples alone for Philip, four million if France could secure the Two Sicilies, retain Strassburg and Landau and avoid the humiliation of the dismantling of Dunkirk. That the offer was rejected goes some way to refute those who represent Marlborough as dominated by avarice and always ready to sacrifice his country to his pocket. There is no valid reason to doubt Torcy's story and, putting the matter in the worst light, Marlborough can hardly have expected to make more than this from continuing the war. Even with his large emoluments as Commander-in-Chief two million livres (roughly £80,000) would take years

[1] May 6th, *cf.* Torcy, I., 210.

to amass, quite apart from the uncertainty of the political horizon. If peace was not reached in 1709 some better supported reason must be found than Marlborough's interest in carrying on the war. Moreover to have procured a peace on terms such as Torcy offered would have eclipsed Blenheim as a foundation for popularity and made him independent of the uncongenial Whigs. His health which had given constant trouble all through 1708 provided another motive to incline him to peace. The frequent headaches and the constant thirst from which he had suffered were symptoms of the paralysis which was to overtake him shortly after the accession of George I. (*cf.* p. 484), and there is no reason to suspect the genuineness of the frequent references to his desire for rest which fill his correspondence with his most confidential friends.

Unfortunately, the spectacle of Louis XIV. reduced to accepting the principle of the cession to the Archduke of the entire Spanish inheritance overpowered the judgment of some of the Allies to such an extent that the Preliminaries of The Hague, presented to the French minister on May 17th/28th, contained two articles which not even Louis's desperate plight could make him swallow. He would have acknowledged Anne, expelled the "Old Pretender," demolished Dunkirk, restored to the Empire Alsace with Strassburg, agreed to the exclusion of France from trade with Spanish America, abandoned Newfoundland to England, and given the Dutch a barrier which included Maubeuge, Mons, Charleroi, and Condé as well as Ypres and Tournai: he would even have repudiated Philip's pretensions to Spain and have withdrawn all French troops serving in that coun-

try. But when the Allies insisted that Louis should himself assist in forcibly expelling his grandson from Spain, should Philip fail to evacuate the Peninsula within two months, the pride of the Grand Monarque revolted. Moreover, to this article was added another which stipulated that if Spain had not been evacuated within two months the cessation of arms should be at an end. Now as it had been demanded (Article 22) that certain fortresses should be handed over to the Allies as pledges of good faith, in the almost certain event of Philip refusing to quit Spain this would have placed Louis at the mercy of the Allies,[1] and unable to resist should they raise their terms. The Allies' demands were certainly exorbitant; the two obnoxious articles were so severe that they gave Louis a fine case on which to appeal to the patriotism of France; nevertheless the root of the failure of the negotiations lies elsewhere. By treating the Partition Treaties, largely his own work, as mere "scraps of paper," Louis had made it difficult for the Allies to put much confidence in his plighted word; at any rate without substantial securities and guarantees they dared not relax their grip on France.

Marlborough's part in these negotiations would be easier to disentangle were it not that for this critical period his Dispatches are unusually unenlightening. For no year during the war are fewer letters extant than for 1709. Clearly the Duke was not the main obstacle to peace. Torcy, it is true, who had placed his hopes on satisfying the Maritime Powers in order to induce them not to press the claims of the Emperor and of Savoy,

[1] *Cf.* Hare MSS., p. 223.

found the Duke, who arrived at The Hague (May 7th/18th), unwilling to proceed along these lines, but Hare, a really good authority, vouches for the readiness of both Marlborough and Eugene to have the demands reconsidered. This is borne out by Marlborough's letters of May 16th/27th to Stanhope and to Townshend. Cranstoun wrote that it was believed Marlborough had been "for passing from that article," but "in prudence would not take it upon him, knowing what advantage his enemies at home would have made of it if any cross accident had fallen out thereafter," and this view is confirmed by Marlborough's letter to Godolphin of June 16th/27th.[1]

> I have as much mistrust for the sincerity of France as any man living can have but I will own that, in my opinion, if France had delivered up the towns mentioned in the preliminaries and demolished Dunkirk . . . they must have been at our discretion so that if they had played tricks so much the worse for themselves, but I do not love to be singular especially when it was doing what France seemed to desire.

Moreover, great as was his influence in England, Marlborough had to act with colleagues whom necessity rather than choice had given him; he had to satisfy the Whigs, and in Townshend he had a colleague who more truly represented the Whig ideas and wishes.

Actually during the final stages Marlborough had taken the field and Townshend was in sole charge. After Torcy's rejection of the preliminaries presented on May 17th/28th[2] negotiations were renewed. Towns-

[1] Disp., iv., 505.

[2] *Cf.* Torcy, i, 304–326.

hend acting on instructions from England demanded the surrender of such Spanish fortresses as would assure the conquest of Castile. The demand, as Marlborough told Heinsius, was quite beyond Louis's power to fulfil, but Townshend persisted and with Torcy's rejection of it the protracted negotiations ended (August 19th/30th).

To blame Marlborough for this failure, to attribute it to his determination to continue the war for private gain, is unwarranted. The Emperor, whose demands had risen steadily as France seemed inclined to yield,[1] the Dutch, who had intrigued to twist the question of guarantees into an improvement of their barrier, Townshend, who had displayed more obstinacy than reasonableness, must all bear greater burdens of responsibility. The Duke might perhaps have been more emphatic on the side of concession but he had no power to modify the specific instructions of the Cabinet. His private correspondence can leave no reasonable doubt of his genuine desire for peace, except in those who are prepared to assert that not even to his most familiar confidants did he ever speak the truth. The British government would have been well advised had they taken the risk of trusting Louis, despite their justifiable suspicions of his good faith, but it would have been a real risk and a bold experiment indeed to let France recuperate in peace while the Allies committed themselves to the task, arduous and protracted as Napoleon's experience shows it must have proved, of establishing the Archduke in Castile. It was unfortunate that the Emperor should have persisted in demanding "the in-

[1] *Cf.* Petkum to Torcy: Round MSS., p. 341.

heritance, the whole inheritance and nothing but the inheritance" and that the Maritime Powers, largely in loyalty to him, should have refused Philip of Anjou any jot or tittle of compensation. But the demands of the Emperor and of the Dutch would be easier to justify had they shown themselves disposed to make greater efforts to win the final victory needed to obtain them all they claimed.

Well before the final rupture Marlborough was in the field. With great trouble an augmentation of six thousand men had been wrung from the Dutch. The King of Prussia had as usual been obstructive, threatening to recall his contingent from Italy. A little judicious flattery from Marlborough, who assured Frederick that he would rather have Prussian troops under him than any others (Disp., iv., 393), worked wonders and even produced an increase of five thousand men in the Prussian contingent, while Parliament much encouraged by the fall of Lille had voted £7,000,000 for the campaign of 1709. The net result was that when operations opened Marlborough found his force stronger by twenty-five thousand than at the corresponding date in 1708. "I hope," wrote Hare, "the field will do the business if the Hague cannot." All promised well. On May 1st/12th Marlborough declared "our troops were never in better order nor the enemy's in worse." But the Allies' exorbitant demands had provoked a wonderful reaction in France. Louis had appealed to his subjects to save their country from enemies bent on her utter humiliation and their response had displayed the strength of French patriotism and of his hold on the country. Despite a winter of unparalleled severity

followed by universal dearth and in places by famine France rallied round Louis. The remnants of the French army had spent the winter in a condition of destitution which beggars description,[1] but they were resolute to continue the struggle. Recruits flocked to the colours, the famine proving a not unmixed evil since, in Louis's own words, hunger brought them to the bread waggons. Nobles sent their plate to the mint, townspeople followed suit. The deficiencies of equipment and supplies seemed insurmountable,[2] but such was the zeal and spirit of the troops that more cohesion and discipline was maintained than had seemed possible. Moreover in Villars Louis had a commander who would not shrink from facing the pair of great generals whom none of his fellow Marshals had been able to withstand.

Villars is described by Parker as "a gallant enterprising man," "but," Parker goes on, "he was intolerably vain and full of himself and when anything happened amiss under any of the other generals he used to shrug his shoulders and say 'Villars cannot be everywhere.'" Indeed only a bold and self-confident man could have undertaken the command of the French forces at this juncture, for his task might have appalled the bravest. The want of food was such that it had been impossible to collect supplies to fill the magazines: money, transport, forage, boots, were all wanting and Villars, keenly alive as his Memoirs show him to have been to the advantages of the initiative[3]—had no option

[1] *Cf. Malplaquet*, pp. 1–11. [2] *Cf.* Villars, *Mémoires*, lxx., 257 ff.

[3] He writes in one place that they are so great that they are to be preferred to the defensive even under the most favourable conditions for the defence.

but to await attack. He could only collect his troops in the plain of Lens so as to cover Arras. With all he could muster he was still inferior to the Allies but in the strong position he had chosen he awaited attack with equanimity. Indeed he had caused his main position to be but lightly entrenched,[1] partly in order to give his own men confidence by showing them he felt no need to cower behind elaborate fortifications, partly in hopes of encouraging the Allies to attack him. He was far from contemplating a passive defence. To those who urged him to fortify himself more strongly and adopt a purely defensive rôle he had replied, "my principle is that saying of Turenne's so often repeated and never perhaps so true as to-day, that the general who is absolutely determined to avoid a battle delivers himself over to him that seeks it."

The French position was strong by nature. Its left rested on the upper Lys West of Béthune in country to be very familiar to British troops from the autumn of 1914 onwards: against a turning movement up the Lys he was protected by the fortified town of St. Venant which was connected with Béthune by entrenched posts round Hinges and Robecq. His right stretched almost as far as the Scarpe and utilized the canal from the Deule near Pont à Vendin to Douai as a barrier against outflanking movements. His centre lay across ground on which the successors of Marlborough's men were to face the Germans for three years or more, over which they were to fight in September, 1915, a battle even bloodier than Malplaquet. It was covered by an entrenchment resting on its left on the marshes round

[1] *Mémoires*, lxx., 276.

Cuinchy, on its right on those round Hulluch. In this position Villars calculated to be able to prevent the Allies from laying siege to Douai, to take them in flank should they push towards the Boulonnais and attack St. Omer or Aire, to repulse them with loss should they hurl themselves against the portion of his lines which faced La Bassée.[1]

Delayed by an exceptionally backward season as well as by the negotiations, the Allies did not complete their concentration till the beginning of June. They then assembled nearly 120,000 men[2] between Menin and Courtrai, whence they advanced into the plains of Lille (June 7th/18th) and then moved South-Westward up the Deule as though to attack Hulluch. But quite apart from the strength of Villars's lines heavy rains had greatly increased the difficulty of approaching them and rendered an assault most unadvisable. Two alternatives remained, the move round Villars's left, which apparently was what he expected, or a transfer of operations to the valley of the Scheldt, where Tournai was reported to be but weakly held.

Marlborough himself, for ever casting his eyes in the direction of the Channel ports and the advantages of naval co-operation, was anxious as a preliminary to attack Ypres.[3] Ypres was known to be well prepared, but without its reduction the Allies would find themselves inconveniently restricted should they try an

[1] Cf. *Malplaquet*, p. 16.

[2] Marlborough's army mustered 197 squadrons and 129 battalions, Eugene's 123 squadrons and 66 battalions (Millner, p. 259), the British contingent amounting to 14 squadrons and 20 battalions.

[3] Cf. *Memoirs of Goslinga* (a Dutch Deputy), published at Leeuwarden in 1857, pp. 103–104.

advance up the Lys. Their first moves served to confirm Villars in his appreciation of their intentions. They brought their battering train forward to Menin and pushed their main body up within two leagues of Villars's lines.[1] Villars made so sure they would either attack him, or at any rate besiege Ypres, that he summoned up from Tournai and from other garrisons further East all available troops so as to be ready for the chance of a counterstroke.

But Marlborough was not going to play into Villars's hands. Under cover of his apparent intentions to attack the lines he was planning a dash upon Tournai, which Eugene was anxious to attack. The capture of Tournai did not hold out as great strategical advantages as did the turning of the French left, though it would greatly facilitate an advance upon Cambrai, but Villars had been tricked into reducing the garrison and the town was but ill-provisioned. On the evening of June 15th/26th the Allies moved out from their camp at Seclin, advancing as though to attack Villars's lines but, turning shortly to the left, found themselves committed to one of those great night marches by which their commanders had so often changed the aspect of affairs. Pressing on all through the summer's night they found themselves by seven next morning under the walls of Tournai to their own surprise as well as to the consternation of their enemy.[2] So completely were the garrison surprised that their foragers were cut off and taken. The investment was at once begun by Marlborough's troops. Eugene's taking post between Pont à Tressin on the Marque and St. Amand on the Scarpe to cover the siege.

[1] Kane, p. 82.

[2] *Cf.* Parker, p. 158.

Tournai was one of the strongest of the girdle of defended places with which Vauban had protected France. Its citadel "on rising ground with a gentle ascent from the town" was reputed "the finest and strongest fortification in Europe,"[1] while Kane adds that the approach was made specially difficult by "there being more works a great deal under ground than above." It was therefore all the more fortunate that Marlborough's feints had tricked Villars into calling off the pick of the garrison, which was thus reduced below the force required for an effectual defence. The Marshal was furious at having been outwitted, but he could do nothing to save the town, and his credit at the French Court was much reduced. He himself attributed his inaction to the all but complete dearth of provisions—"One accustoms one's self to anything, but I believe the habit of not eating is not very easy to acquire," he wrote.[2] Meanwhile the siege was being vigorously prosecuted. The siege-train arrived on June 29th/July 10th; three days later the bombardment began. Villars had to content himself with shifting to his right and throwing up new lines which covered Douai: at the same time Condé and Valenciennes were prepared for defence, while by inundating the country on the banks of the Scheldt and Haine obstacles were planted across the path of any Allied advance further to the Eastward.

The siege of Tournai acquired a distinct reputation among the armies of that day as a specially murderous affair. Mining was a marked feature of the operations and inflicted heavy casualties on the assailants. The

[1] Checquers Court MSS., p. 199.
[2] *Malplaquet*, pp. 22 ff.

weather was bad and the besiegers had great hardships to endure; "we are up to our knees in the trenches," Marlborough's secretary Cardonnel wrote to Walpole, but though mines and inundations might impede the progress of the siege they could not save Tournai. Villars had received reinforcements from the Upper Rhine but his unpaid and half-starved troops were only kept together by his splendid courage and his appeals to their patriotism and he dared not venture to attack the covering force. His manœuvres are dismissed by a contemporary writer[1] with the contemptuous remark: "Such motions had done the Marshal service with the German generals but they were no use to Tournai." On July 15th/26th an assault, pressed home with great gallantry though at heavy cost, carried several important outworks, on which the Governor surrendered the town (July 19th/30th), retiring with the remnants of the garrison into the citadel. This the besiegers at once prepared to reduce, but its siege was even more difficult than that of the town as the garrison was quite numerous enough for the defence of so small a post. The fighting was fiercer than ever. "The many mines we have to encounter," Marlborough explained, "obliges us to carry on all our operations by sap," and an officer of the Guards wrote, "there is not one foot of ground that is not undermined and casemated."[2] When the miners did break through into one of the garrison's galleries they could make little progress "because of the enemy's continual fire of small shot underground," to combat which bombs were rolled into the galleries to dislodge

[1] *Military History*, ii., 103.
[2] Checquers Court MSS., p. 199.

them.[1] At last the assailants prevailed. Worn out by continual exertions, never off duty, the garrison could hold out no longer; more than once guards were taken in their casemates, asleep from sheer fatigue,[2] and on August 23rd/September 3rd the citadel surrendered. It had cost the besiegers dear, well over five thousand casualties, and the British regiments who had shared in the work[3] had borne their full proportion.

Villars had counted on Tournai detaining the Allies for the whole campaign and declared that the Governor should have held out longer, but he had need to exculpate himself for having been caught napping when the citadel fell. Some time before that happened the Allied generals had been taking counsel for their next move, and after a feint against Marchiennes (July 28th/August 8th) had alarmed Villars for the centre of his new position; the covering army had moved to a position between Pont à Marque on the right and Rumegiès on the left, partly for reasons of supply, partly to observe the enemy. Here on August 9th/20th Marlborough had reviewed the troops and found them in excellent order "particularly Her Majesty's subjects." He was not going to rest on his oars, and three days before the white flag was hoisted on the ramparts of Tournai Orkney had started off with a picked detachment on a new errand.

[1] Disp., iv., 572. [2] Parker, p. 160.

[3] The Royal Scots, Buffs, 37th (Hampshires), and three regiments since disbanded were employed against the town; the 8th (King's), 10th (Lincolnshires), 15th (E. Yorkshires) and 16th (Bedfordshires) in the siege of the citadel.

Cranstoun in the last of his illuminating letters[1]—he was killed at Malplaquet at the head of his Cameronians—discusses the alternatives which the fall of Tournai would leave open. "Valenciennes and Douai," he writes, "are what we would wish to take or next to them Béthune and Arras, but Villars keeps yet a body of 25 or 30 battalions in his lines at Lens and Béthune and is come with his main body near Valenciennes where he has made new lines and those very strong betwixt the Scheldt and the Scarpe, which is a piece of ground only of two leagues over and impracticable most of the way so that it will be easy for a small body to defend these." So posted Villars could cover Valenciennes and Douai or anticipate the Allies should they make for the La Bassée lines. Further the forage in the fields had already been consumed, "and there is nothing in barns this year," so that the difficulties of besieging any of the places named might prove insuperable. Failing these there remained Condé, which Cranstoun disregarded as not sufficiently important, Mons, and Ypres. It was to the last of these that he himself inclined "because it makes us a complete headcover to our country and opens the way towards Dunkerque and the sea-coast. But neither Mons or Ypres opens France to us and either will be hard to take in so advanced a season, both being in great part defended by morass." There is a flavour of 1914–1918 about this last remark and it is odd to think of British troops as contemplating forcing a passage through Ypres to the Channel ports, but it was on the other alternative that

[1] This letter (Portland MSS., iv., 496–498) is ascribed to July, 1708, but can only belong to 1709.

Marlborough and Eugene had decided, influenced no doubt by the knowledge that Mons was weakly held.

Orkney and his detachment had orders to secure the passage of the Haine at St. Ghislain.[1] The afternoon of the citadel's surrender saw the Prince of Hesse-Cassel starting on Orkney's tracks with another sixty squadrons and four thousand infantry, and by midnight the whole army was marching hard for Mons, except for some two dozen battalions who were left to see Tournai evacuated and to watch Villars.

The march to Mons, carried out in continued rain, was strenuous even for the men whom Marlborough had so accustomed to great exertions. Millner writes that "for the space of nine days following our army continued in a constant motion without even a day's halt." Hesse-Cassel's detachment surpassed themselves by covering fifty-three miles between 4 P.M. on the Tuesday (August 23rd/September 3rd) and 2 A.M. on Friday, at which hour they were crossing the Haine to the North and East of Mons at Nimy and Obourg, where 205 years later the Royal Fusiliers, Royal Irish, and Middlesex were to meet the first impact of von Kluck's great host. Orkney, finding St. Ghislain strongly held, had not attempted to force the passage there but the speed of Hesse-Cassel's march had made up for this, and when the Prince wheeled to his right and advanced South-West, leaving Mons on the right, to attack the lines which had been thrown up from Mons South-South-East to the Sambre he found them held by only three regiments of

[1] The right of Sir Charles Ferguson's Fifth Division rested at this point on August 23, 1914, when the 12th Brandenburg Grenadiers were so sharply received by the 1st Royal West Kents.

dragoons, who decamped at once. He pushed forward therefore to the line Jemappes-Frameries,[1] and planted himself between Mons and the French. He was just in time. Thirty squadrons of dragoons had been hurried off the moment Villars heard the Allies were making for Mons, but coming on the scene just after the lines had been pierced made no effort to interfere with Hesse-Cassel, falling back on Quiévrain. Here they found Villars himself. The Marshal had some cavalry with him but his infantry were far behind and without them he was powerless. And while Villars was waiting in impatience for his slow-moving foot the Allies' main body, following Hesse-Cassel as speedily as deep and miry roads would let them, had reached Havré, East by South of Mons, on the evening of August 26th/September 6th and next morning on a sudden alarm of a French advance against Hesse a short march brought them to his assistance. Thereupon the French, a cavalry reconnaissance in force led by Villars himself, recoiled on Quiévrain.[2] Once again Villars had been outwitted by a combination of skilful planning and vigorous execution. The rapidity with which Marlborough had pounced on Mons almost before Tournai fell had surprised him completely. The performance of the Allied troops in marching so far in so short a time would have been creditable in any age; over the roads of the early eighteenth century and in bad weather it was nothing short of remarkable and had completed Villars's discomfiture.

[1] It was at Frameries that on August 24, 1914, General Shaw's 9th Brigade successfully held up the German attacks until ordered to withdraw.

[2] *Cf.* Orkney, E. H. R., xix., 317.

CHAPTER XVII

MALPLAQUET

THE MALPLAQUET AND MONS COUNTRY—THE ALLIED DELAY—THE ATTACK—ORANGE'S BLUNDER—WITHERS'S FLANK ATTACK—THE SUCCESS IN THE CENTRE—THE FRENCH RETREAT—CASUALTIES AND CRITICISMS—MONS TAKEN.

THE country West and South-West of Mons on which Villars now confronted the Allies was by no means the same in character in 1709 as the British army found it in August, 1914. Then the whole area from Mons Westward for eight miles and more and for half that distance to the South of the Condé Canal was an intricate tangle of mining villages, factories, slag heaps, and railways, part of the Belgian Black Country. In 1709 it was covered from the Haine almost to the Sambre by forest country interspersed with highly cultivated open spaces. Of these forests the modern map bears traces in names like Bois de Boussu even where the trees have given place to miles of grimy cottages and cobbled roads, but from the Southern edge of the industrial district woods still stretch almost to Maubeuge, though in many places their shape and area have altered considerably, while the substitution of modern names for those in use two hundred years ago makes it a little difficult to reconcile the battle-field of 1709 with the map of 1914. But substantially the gap which exists today between the Bois de la Lanière, North-West of Maubeuge, and the Bois de Blaregnies, the modern

name of the woods known in 1709 as the Bois de Tanières, Bois de Sars, and Bois de Blangies, is the same as it was when it formed the Southernmost of the two main openings in the forest barrier between Villars and Mons. It is the Northern gap which has changed. There the road from Valenciennes runs now through the buildings and slag heaps in which the Fifth Division made their great stand in 1914; in 1709 it ran through woods which formed a scarcely less serious hindrance to military movements. By one or other of these openings Villars must come if he would save Mons.

For the moment it was the Northern passage that Villars was threatening, for after the arrival, late on August 27th/September 7th, of his belated foot he advanced across the little river Hogneau and took post between Montreuil and Athis. But he was only feinting at the Trouée de Boussu, as this gap was called, his real objective was the Southern passage and at daybreak on the 29th/9th the French army began moving to its right, screened by the woods from their adversaries. The Allied generals, however, were themselves on the way to reconnoitre the Trouée d'Aulnois and it was by the squadrons under the Prince d'Auvergne which had pushed out ahead of their party that the move of the French was discovered. Orders were at once issued to Marlborough's own troops who were encamped round about Quévy le Grand to advance at once to Aulnois. Eugene's, until this time in position West of Quaregnon ready to dispute the passage of the Boussu gap, were ordered to move to their left to support Marlborough's. Auvergne and his cavalry meanwhile made what head they could against Villars's

advance but were before long driven in, and Villars was able to push forward and occupy the ridge which runs from the Bois de la Lanière to the Bois de Sars and serves as a watershed between the Trouille on the East and the Honnelle and Hogneau on the West.

Villars has been severely criticized for his failure to force on a battle there and then.[1] It is argued that a prompt attack would have enabled him to throw superior numbers on Marlborough's men while Eugene was still some miles away. But Villars, with the last army France could muster under him, could hardly afford to run great risks; the deployment of his columns into line must have taken up a considerable time, he would then have had to advance through the Malplaquet gap, which would have taken more time and have brought him out into the open beyond the shelter of the woods—for Marlborough's troops were forming up in front of their camp[2]—with his left exposed to a flank attack by Eugene. Under other circumstances Villars would have been the first to take the risk; as it was he contented himself with pushing infantry forward into the woods that fringed the gap and their fire forced d'Auvergne's squadrons to fall back on their infantry, who had meanwhile advanced within cannon shot of the French and suffered some loss from the French artillery to which they could not reply as their own guns were not yet up (Orkney). However, their bold advance helped to confirm Villars in his determination not to risk an attack and so while the Allies "lay upon our arms all night, not doubting but that we should

[1] Cf. *Malplaquet*, pp. 47 ff.

[2] *Cf.* Orkney's letter of September 5th/16th, E. H. R., xix, p. 317.

attack them next morning by break of day," the French busied themselves with throwing up entrenchments across the gap between the woods.

Few things in Marlborough's military career have been more adversely criticized than the delay in the Allied attack at Malplaquet, but to have attacked late on the afternoon of August 29th/September 9th would have been folly. The French position was strong even though no elaborate entrenchments had yet been thrown up. Villars himself describes it as "narrow enough to give the enemy a formidable task in forcing it but sufficiently well protected by woods on the flanks to prevent our being overlapped by superior numbers." To attack without the artillery Marlborough knew so well how to use, with Eugene's men hardly all in line, and with the last twenty battalions from Tournai more than a day's march away, would have merely courted disaster. It is the failure to attack next day which requires explanation. The artillery was up and with every hour's delay the French works grew more formidable until in the end Orkney wrote, "I don't believe ever army in the world was attacked in such a post, from their right to the left I may call it a counter-scarp and traverse, in many places three, four and five retrenchments one behind another." However, Withers and the Tournai troops had not arrived and, as Orkney put it, "people judged twenty battalions were worth staying another day for," while the pamphlet on *The Management of the War*, issued as a counterblast to Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*, defends the postponement on account of the fatigue of the troops. Kane repre-

sents Marlborough as having wished to attack without waiting for Withers but says that Eugene and the other members of the council of war advised delay. In default of definite evidence the responsibility must remain uncertain.

But the real question is not whether the Allies should have attacked on the 10th rather than on the 11th but whether either tactical or strategical considerations required them to attack at all. They were between Villars and Mons, and though not greatly superior to him in numbers could have safely detached troops to besiege Mons if they had entrenched their positions opposite Villars.[1] The French commander had been unable to save Tournai because he dared not venture a pitched battle: could he afford to see Mons go the same way as Tournai? Had the capture of Mons been their main object the Allies might well have refrained from attacking and have left Villars the dilemma of inactivity or an attack on a well-posted enemy.

Mons, however, though a prize worth having had no vital strategical importance to the Allies and it was not for Mons that Marlborough and Eugene were prepared to hurl their troops against Villars's formidable entrenchments. The Allies attacked because for once they had the chance of a battle. "Je ne désire rien tant qu'une grande bataille," said Napoleon. "Recherche toutes les occasions." Marlborough had offered battle and been refused it too often to let such a chance go. He realized fully that to defeat the enemy's field army even at a heavy cost outweighed far the capture of many fortified cities while the hostile army

[1] *Cf.* Kane, p. 84.

remained intact. Moreover, he had enough confidence in himself, his colleague, and his troops to take the risks even when the hostile position was as strong and the enemy to be attacked as formidable as on this occasion.

While Villars's men were digging in across the Trouée d'Aulnois and Withers and the troops from Tournai steadily drawing nearer, Marlborough was not idle. The investment of Mons was completed and to make sure that Villars would not try to slip succour through to Mons by the Northern route, St. Ghislain was attacked and stormed (August 30th/September 10th), a success the more valuable because it secured a shorter route by which Withers could reach the field. Meanwhile the French positions were being reconnoitred. They were in truth formidable. The trenches extended right across the gap of rather less than two miles wide and were on the top of a slight ridge from which the ground sloped gently down to East and West, concealing from the Allies the movements of the French reserves. There was not therefore that possibility of taking in from the start all the enemy's dispositions such as had been so well utilized at Blenheim and Ramillies. Moreover, the woods which flanked the gap still further concealed the French troops and though the reconnaissances and bickerings of the previous days had shown that these were held in force, Villars's exact dispositions were unknown. Actually he had on his right in the Bois de la Lanière and the adjacent entrenchments thirty-seven battalions under d'Artagnan, with another eight in support. His right centre, separated from his right by a battery of twenty guns, was held by seventeen battalions including the

famous Gardes Suisses and Gardes Françaises. The left centre stretching to the edge of the Bois de Sars was entrusted to thirteen battalions in front line, among them the five battalions of the Irish Brigade, with the four battalions of the Bavarian and Cologne Guards in reserve. Twenty-three battalions held the edges of the Bois de Sars, among them some of the most famous in the French service, Le Roi, Provence, and Royal Marine, another seventeen were posted in second line entrenchments behind the wood. The cavalry, a total of 260 squadrons, were massed in rear of the centre in readiness to pass through the gaps which had been left in the entrenchments and fall upon the enemy as they climbed the slope. Eighty guns were judiciously posted at intervals mostly in front of the entrenchments but some in the woods to flank the approaches. Boufflers was in command of the right, Villars reserving to himself the special supervision of the left.

For the attack on this formidable position the Allies had at their disposal a force not greatly superior on paper for they had only 124 battalions against 118 and 252 squadrons against 260, but the French units were much under strength, battalions averaging below 500[1] whereas those of the Allies were much stronger so that their total force was little under 100,000 and that of the French perhaps 80,000. In artillery they had 100 guns against 80 but their superiority, both in this respect and in numbers, was very largely discounted by the formidable character of the French entrenchments. Moreover, if they were to attack at all there was no

[1] *Malplaquet*, p. 56.

alternative to a direct advance. An outflanking move east of the Bois de la Lanière would have been checked by marshy ground and would have involved a division into two wings separated by the forest and with the enemy in the interior position. On the French left the forest barrier equally forbade any movement of the sort on a large scale, though Withers brought his column through the Bois l'Évêque which lies South of St. Ghislain and came into action beyond the extreme left of the French line.[1] But the frontal attack on the entrenchments was to be preceded by attacks from North and East on the French troops in the salient of the Bois de Sars, which must be cleared before the centre could be assaulted. These attacks were entrusted to Schulemberg, who attacked the Northern face with thirty-six battalions of Eugene's army, and to Lottum who with twenty-two battalions, mainly Prussian and Hanoverian but apparently including some British, was simultaneously to advance up the glade, wheel to his right and fall on the Eastern face. Meanwhile, Orkney with fifteen British battalions was to move forward on Lottum's left but to refrain from attacking the main position till the Bois de Sars was cleared.[2] His rôle was to cover Lottum against any attempt at a counter-attack by the French centre and to connect up with the left wing where the Prince of Orange with thirty battalions, mainly Dutch, was to demon-

[1] This is noticeable as an example, almost unparalleled in those days, of a detachment being brought on to the battle-field itself by a converging movement after battle had been joined, without taking part in the previous concentration and deployment: it quite anticipates Ney's march to Bautzen or that of the Crown Prince of Prussia to Sadowa.

[2] Orkney, p. 319.

strate against the Bois de la Lanière. The artillery of the Allies was pushed forward within range of the entrenchments, two main batteries, one of forty guns on the right, another of twenty-eight on the left, being massed against the main position. In rear of the infantry, ready to profit by any advantages they might gain, came the cavalry.

The morning of August 31st/September 11th broke with mist and fog which helped the Allies not a little in making their dispositions (Orkney) which they were further able to conceal behind the Bois de Tiry which lay in the middle of the Trouée d'Aulnois. Shortly before 7 o'clock "a discharge of all our artillery" (Orkney) gave the signal for the attack. "Really," Orkney goes on, "it was a noble sight to see so many different bodies marching over the plain to attack a thick wood where you could see no men." Success at first attended them. Schulemberg's battalions beat the defenders back from the Northern fringes of the wood, Lottum pressing forward across the Ruisseau de la Rulerie which ran along the Eastern edge, stormed the entrenchments and pushed on into the wood. Simultaneously Orkney advanced to cover him and the Dutch coming forward on the left halted as arranged just outside cannon shot, while the Allied artillery kept up a brisk fire from which the French squadrons massed in rear of the centre suffered severely,[1] though their guns replied no less vigorously. But the struggle in the woods was bitterly contested and Schulemberg's Danes, Hessians, and Saxons, falling into disorder as they advanced through the trees, were

[1] *Malplaquet*, p. 60.

checked by field fortifications which had been thrown up in the heart of the wood and gave way before counter-attacks. Lottum too was brought to a standstill and gradually forced back, and after some hours of savage fighting Orkney saw many of the Allied foot retiring from the wood and began to come under a pretty sharp flanking fire himself. On this he departed from his "positive orders to send in none of my foot to the woods" and ordered the First Guards (the Grenadiers) and his own Royal Scots to Lottum's assistance. Their intervention he proudly adds "very soon redrest matters there again."[1] As the two British battalions fell on the flank of Lottum's opponents Chemerault brought forward some twelve battalions of the French centre to counter-attack Orkney, but before they could be launched to the charge the watchful Villars, seeing that Marlborough had brought up a mass of cavalry to support Orkney, forbade the charge. Thus Lottum was able to renew his attack and gradually, as his clearing of the wood progressed, the pressure on du Roi and Saintonge at the salient angle of the French line became more than they could stand, and "slowly and with a horrid carnage" they were driven back. At last after several hours of fighting the defenders were forced back out of the wood and Schulemberg and Lottum began to form up in the open beyond it.

To succour his left Villars now fetched several

[1] This assistance Mr. Fortescue, writing before Orkney's letter was available, puts to the credit of the Buffs, the 16th (Bedfordshires) and Temple's, but he cites no authority whereas Orkney's statement is quite explicit.

brigades from his centre, among them the Irishmen, and joining these to Chemerault's detachment prepared a great counter-attack against the Allied right. He could do this with more security because with the Allied left things had gone very much amiss. The Prince of Orange, like Orkney disregarding his orders though without Orkney's justification, had suddenly converted his demonstration into a real attack and had hurled his Dutchmen at the Bois de la Lanière and at the entrenchments to the North of it. Headed by two of the Scottish regiments in the Dutch service, Tullibardine's and Hepburn's, and by the famous Blue Guards, so beloved by William III., the Dutch attacked with no less courage than ill-fortune. They came under a tremendous and destructive fire from front and flank and, though they carried the first line of trenches in two places, reserves whom Boufflers launched at them caught them disordered by this first success and hurled them back in rout. Tullibardine fell at the head of his men, the Blue Guards were cut to pieces, and though the Prince of Hesse intervened with twenty squadrons and enabled the remnants of Orange's infantry to get away, over half of them had fallen, and the division was practically out of action. Marlborough had to hurry to the left with such reserves as he could collect, some Prussian and Hessian battalions under Fagel, and was in time to re-establish affairs. Boufflers, personally the bravest of the brave, lacked the prompt decision and tactical insight of a really great general[1] and did not venture the counter-attack which might have converted Orange's repulse into complete disaster.

[1] Cf. *Malplaquet*, p. 67.

The battle looked none too promising for the Allies but help was at hand. At the critical moment Withers and his twenty battalions at last appeared making for La Folie, a little hamlet on the extreme left of the French line. According to Brodrick, Marlborough had at first thought to bring Withers across to his left to support the Dutch but decided to push the advantage already obtained on the right. Certainly nothing could have been more effective than the stroke which Withers dealt. It seems that he arrived just as Schulemberg and Lottum, emerging out of the woods, had been received with a tremendous fire (Millner, p. 275) and been pushed back by Villars's reserves. But at this point Withers caught the French counter-attack in flank and Villars, trying to make head against this new and unexpected danger, was hit and so badly wounded that he had to be carried off the field. The result was that Lottum and Schulemberg rallied and being spurred on by Eugene, who was himself wounded but remained in action, even renewed their advance, while the bulk of the French infantry of the centre were drawn off to the flank and swallowed up in that part of the fight. It was then that occurred the dramatic encounter between the 18th Royal Irish, who had arrived with Withers, and their exiled countrymen in the French service. Parker describes how the 18th, headed by their Colonel, Kane, advanced towards their enemies with:

The six platoons of our first fire made ready. When we had advanced within a hundred yards of them they gave us a fire of one of their ranks. whereupon we halted and

returned them the fire of six platoons at once and immediately made ready the six platoons of our second fire and advanced upon them again. They then gave us the fire of another rank and we returned them a second fire which made them shrink, however they gave us the fire of a third rank after a scattering manner and then retired . . . on which we sent our third fire after them and saw them no more.

Superiority in fire control and fire discipline and, it must be added, the heavier bullet fired by the British musket had been too much even for the "Wild Geese." Withers's attack was decisive and before long the French left was in full retreat.

Meanwhile the diversion of the French infantry of the centre to the left had given Orkney his chance. Advancing "with surprising celerity"[1] and well supported by the Allied artillery his thirteen battalions[2] carried the entrenchments opposite them with ease. The French and Swiss Guards with whom Boufflers attempted to stop Orkney quickly gave way in disorder and left a gap in the line. By 1 P.M. the centre of the position was in the Allies' hands and Orkney's infantry were assisting the passage of the cavalry through the openings in the field-works while the Allied guns were hauled into position to play on the French cavalry. Simultaneously Marlborough brought the Dutch forward again, backing them up with Fagel's men and this sufficed to keep the French right occupied. Up till this the battle had been an infantry fight, now came the turn of the cavalry. For some time there was an even struggle. "There was such pelting at one an-

[1] *Mil. Hist.*, ii., 109. [2] Less 1st Guards and Royal Scots detached.

other," wrote Orkney, "I never really saw the like." The Dutch squadrons charged and beat back the front line of French horse but were routed by the Maison du Roi and only succoured by Orkney's infantry who had lined the parados of the trench and gave the pursuers a fire that made them "retreat prodigiously." More Allied squadrons poured through the gaps in the lines: "sometimes they gained a little ground and were as fast beat back again." "I really believe," Orkney goes on, "had not ye foot been there they would have drove our horse out of the field" But every time the Allied horse were thrust back Orkney's infantry gave them succour and a chance to re-form, and meanwhile Marlborough and Eugene were indefatigable in bringing up reserves. Millner describes how the Duke "in person rallied and brought to the charge again" the repulsed squadrons. Orkney writes with admiration of four squadrons of British who played a great part in the struggle: "Jemmy Campbell at the head of the grey dragoons (Royal Scots Greys) behaved like an angell and broke through both lines. So did Panton with little Lord Lumley at the head of one of Lumley's (K. D. G.) and one of Wood's" (3rd D. G.). But the final blow was given when Eugene brought up a last reserve of fresh troops, some Imperial squadrons. Their intervention made even the Maison du Roi give way and then at last all hope was lost to Boufflers, in command since Villars's wound. In vain he had induced some of his infantry who were retiring to turn and fall again upon the Dutch, whom they "beat from the entrenchments they had gained." Orkney hurried to his left and giving "both fair and foul language" in-

duced some of the Dutch to stand: the Prince of Hesse-Cassel put in his cavalry and the French right was at last forced to retreat. It was now between 3 and 4 P. M. and Boufflers saw his right dislodged, his centre pierced, his left already routed. There was nothing to be done but to utilize what was left of his cavalry to cover the general retirement. Reluctantly the infantry of the extreme French right fell back with their shattered centre on Bavai, the left in some disorder making for Quiévrain. Luckily for Boufflers the Allies were too exhausted to pursue effectively; a few squadrons followed his left towards Quiévrain but achieved nothing, being easily checked by a brigade of infantry, so that the French drew off practically unmolested and their losses were not swelled as after Blenheim and Ramillies by large captures during the pursuit.

The Allies' victory though incontestable had cost them dear. Out of about 100,000 men they had lost nearly a fifth. Conspicuous among the sufferers were the Dutch with over 10,000 casualties, largely incurred in Orange's unfortunate attack. The British may be reckoned fortunate in that among twenty battalions and fourteen squadrons, perhaps 14,000 all told, they had no more than 575 killed and 1281 wounded, some hundreds less than their casualties at Blenheim, but for all that the casualties made a great impression at home and Marlborough's enemies promptly fastened on the "butcher's bill" as a handle against him. He himself seems to have been genuinely distressed by the loss of life and this, coupled with his own exertions, rendered him quite unwell for several days after the

battle.[1] His indisposition apparently contributed to the omission to pursue the beaten army in its retirement on Valenciennes. No further effort at interference with the siege of Mons was attempted by the French. Though as Millner allows "by standing the attack so boldly" they had "recovered a part of their former reputation," by "afterwards lying very quiet and not attempting to relieve Mons" they admitted that they had been too badly beaten to be capable of anything more.[2] The siege therefore went forward normally though delayed by heavy rains. The siege-train came up unmolested from Brussels, by October 9th/20th a practicable breach had been made, and the besieged asked for terms. Just before this Berwick, who had been recalled from Dauphiné, came forward to see if he could do anything, but one reconnaissance of the covering position of the Allies was sufficient; he retired and Mons had to capitulate (October 12th/23rd). Thereupon, as the season was already far spent, the weather very wet, the roads very difficult, and forage almost unprocurable, the Allies dispersed to their winter-quarters.

The capture of Mons completed the expulsion of the French from Brabant and Flanders; they were now back within their own territories, on the resources of which they would have in future to rely exclusively. Their prospects were scarcely promising, for if the

[1] *Cf* Disp., iv., 613.

[2] De la Colonie (p. 346) ascribes the French inactivity to the dearth of provisions and forage. The bread was half bran, horses "perished of hunger at their picket ropes" till the troops were immobilized by want of teams for the waggons.

Allies in the other theatres of war, notably in Dauphiné and Alsace, had indeed failed to profit by the concentration of the resources of France in the Netherlands, Villars's failure to withstand the Allied attack augured ill for the future. For Malplaquet, though costly and comparatively barren in immediate results, had unmistakably proved the military superiority of the Allies. The French could not hope to collect a better army or to find an abler commander and yet that army, well-posted and in good spirits, had been forced from its position by an enemy not greatly superior in numbers and little better provided with artillery. All witnesses agree in their surprise at the strength of the position which the Allies had managed to force. Grovestein, a Dutchman, writing to the States-General declared "the enemy was so advantageously posted that when the battle was over we wondered how we had surmounted such difficulties" Marlborough himself wrote,[1] "in viewing the field of battle yesterday morning I find the enemy were strongly posted, besides their entrenchments, which makes our victory the more glorious." Orkney was most emphatic: "They pretend to be pleased their troops have fought so well but it could not be otherwaies as they was posted." The Allies could it is true not claim many prisoners; Marlborough writes that in the heat of the battle there was "little quarter given on either side so that the number of prisoners is not so considerable as it would otherwise have been," and they had only taken sixteen guns with other trophies in proportion; still the French losses had been heavy, they left over 3000 wounded in the hands

[1] Disp., iv., 597.

of the Allies[1] and their total casualties were at least 11,000.[2] Villars's claim that they were only 6000 is preposterous and no compliment to his army, if so slight a punishment suffered to oust them from their strong position. Marlborough and Eugene had fought Malplaquet because they wanted a battle, because they wanted to impress on the French the conviction that there was no resisting the Allies in the open field, and the conduct of the French in the next two campaigns is no small justification. Given the decision to attack, the arrangements for the assault were skilful enough, particularly the rôle assigned to Orkney and admirably carried out by him. As at Blenheim good use was made of the artillery and the support given to the cavalry by the infantry was an admirable example of combined tactics. It is noticeable also that the Allied cavalry relied mainly as Marlborough always taught them to do on shock tactics, on the cold steel not on fire to which the French were prone to have recourse.[3] The use of Withers to press home the advantage gained on the right instead of to restore the balance on the left provides a good example of proper "economy of forces," and a good French critic has singled out for special praise the offensive spirit which throughout inspired the Allied commanders.[4] For the error which so swelled the casualty list Orange alone must bear the blame. His impatience and disobedi-

[1] On September 2nd/13th Marlborough wrote to invite Villars to send waggons to Bavai to fetch the French wounded, which invitation the French accepted (Disp., iv., 596 and 597).

[2] Cf. *Malplaquet*, p 76.

[3] *Cf.* Orkney, p 319.

[4] *Malplaquet*, p. 28.

ence were not within the control of his commanders; their prompt and vigorous use of their reserves redressed the harm done by his folly, but if the Dutch Guards lay "as thick as a flock of sheep" (Orkney) this cannot be laid at the door of either Marlborough or Eugene. Had their orders been intelligently observed by Orange as by Orkney, had his thirty battalions been kept intact until they were needed, the Allies would have won the battle sooner and the French retreat would certainly have been far more closely pressed and more costly. But even as it was Malplaquet was no mean victory. Marlborough had taught people to expect too much: a victory might be a great one even if its results fell short of those which had followed Blenheim, and well worth having even if the price paid was higher than the cost of Ramillies or Oudenarde.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FALL OF THE WHIGS

POLITICAL TROUBLES—SACHEVERELL—THE CAPTAIN-GENERALSHIP FOR LIFE—NEGOTIATIONS RENEWED WITH FRANCE—DOUAI BESIEGED—REDUCTION OF BETHUNE, ST. VENANT, AND AIRE—THE FALL OF THE WHIGS—MARLBOROUGH AND THE NEW MINISTRY.

MARLBOROUGH must have been much perturbed about the political situation long before the conclusion of the campaign of 1709 allowed him to set foot in England. During his arduous struggle against the ablest of all his opponents matters at home had gone far from smoothly; the ill-feeling between Godolphin and the Whigs had been increased by Queensberry's being appointed Secretary of State for Scotland while Orford's claims on the vacant Admiralty had been vigorously pressed by the whole Whig party despite the Queen's aversion to his person. Marlborough, though himself opposed to the appointment, found his Whig colleagues so set upon the satisfaction of their demands that though the Queen went to the length of a personal appeal to him to save her from having to give way he managed to win from her a reluctant consent. But Anne was hurt by the Duke's failure to help her, and meanwhile the breach between the Queen and the Duchess widened. Their correspondence, once so familiar and cordial, was now acrimonious and the complete identification of the Duchess with the Whigs

helped not a little Harley's efforts to gain the Queen's favour and to undermine his opponent's position.

But, as often happens, an incident trivial in itself acquired a disproportionate importance through the circumstances of the moment. On November 5th, three days before Marlborough landed in England, "a foolish parson preached a foolish sermon." Sacheverell's celebrated attack on Godolphin was no mere tirade by an obscure individual in an unimportant position: Sacheverell was one of the fashionable preachers of the day and a prominent figure among High Church clergy. The sermon delivered at St. Paul's on the occasion of an official visit by the Lord Mayor and Corporation was too public and open to be ignored. To have passed over the challenge would have been attributed by the enemies of ministers to timidity. Nothing, however, could have been more disastrous to the Whigs and to Godolphin than the actual result of the impeachment. It does not appear that beyond sympathizing with Godolphin's anger Marlborough concerned himself much with the case; he did not even attend the debates upon it. But he was already nervous about his position and anxious to secure himself so that come what might at Westminster he could carry on his campaigns unaffected, and it was thus that shortly after his return home he fell into a grievous error. This was nothing less than to address to the Queen a request that he might be appointed Captain-General for life.

Such a request would at any time have excited outcry and opposition, though there had been days when Anne would have granted it without demur. But in

1709 the idea was most unwelcome to the Queen: with the growth of her estrangement from the Duchess Anne's personal attitude to Marlborough had changed appreciably. Whigs and Tories were equally hostile to the proposal. The Duke's own colleagues had frowned on the idea when originally put before them. His enemies hinted darkly at deep political designs behind it, talked of would-be dictators, even suggested that the Duke wished to seize the Crown should the Queen die before he did. It is clear, however, that the root of the matter lay in the soldier's desire not to be hurled from his position before he had had time to finish his work, now so near completion. Marlborough was less at home in politics than in strategy and his blunder may be ascribed to his want of touch with the domestic situation. It was indeed an unfortunate step. Constitutional purists were quick to inquire into the records, to show that such a grant would be unprecedented and irregular, that the office of Constable had been conferred for limited periods only since the 13th year of King Henry VIII., that to grant such an office except "durante bene placito regis" would be unheard of. Marlborough did not improve matters by declaring he was only asking for what Monck had had: the precedent had unhappy associations and moreover the records proved that even Monck had only held his post "during pleasure." And to crown all, when the request was refused Marlborough must needs address to the Queen a querulous letter, quite in the Duchess's best style, reproaching his sovereign with disregarding his services and complaining of her treatment of his wife, a step which Anne bitterly resented

and which made matters infinitely worse. Such an action on the part of one normally so much the master of himself is as inexplicable as it was unwise. It is hard to understand how, if Marlborough let annoyance and anxiety and fatigue mislead him into writing it, his serenity and good sense did not reassert themselves and make him tear it up as soon as it was written. The blunder certainly bears the unmistakable stamp of the Duchess; it was as much of a piece with her impetuosity and petulance as it was foreign to Marlborough's habitual tact and good judgment. It is as one of the rare examples of ordinary human stupidity into which he was ever betrayed that the incident is specially worth remembering.

Barely had the Duke suffered this rebuke than fresh friction arose. Lord Essex's death had left vacant the command of his Dragoons (the present 4th Hussars) and the Lieutenancy of the Tower. This post Marlborough had wished to give to the Duke of Northumberland, but Harley persuaded the Queen to bestow it upon Lord Rivers without consulting the Duke and to promise the regiment to John Hill, an officer whose only recommendation was that he was brother to Mrs. Masham, now as strongly established in the Queen's favour as the Duchess in the palmiest days of her influence. This deliberately flouted the Duke's authority as Commander-in-Chief and was hardly calculated to benefit discipline. Marlborough was furious, declared he would resign and though dissuaded by Godolphin, who "showed the greatest desire not to bring this thing to an extremity" lest a crisis should be provoked, proceeded to demand Mrs. Masham's dismissal. At this

Anne took alarm and told Godolphin she would not insist upon giving Hill the regiment, whereupon the more moderate Whigs put pressure on the Duke to withdraw his demand for the dismissal of the Lady-in-Waiting. To this compromise he finally assented but Anne could hardly have been more offended had she had to give way altogether, and, with Mrs. Masham remaining at Court, Harley's influence was more securely planted while Marlborough's relations with the Whigs were not improved.[1]

These relations had been already impaired by the concessions made by Townshend to the Dutch in negotiating the Barrier Treaty. Marlborough had good reason to know his Dutchmen and pointed out that "as soon as they have obtained their desires in the barrier they can have no other thoughts or interest but that of making the peace as soon as possible." Townshend, who had remained in Holland after the rupture with the French negotiators, had, however, concluded on October 18th/29th a treaty by which the Dutch were to have the right to garrison some twenty towns in the Spanish Netherlands and were to obtain Upper Guelders while the navigation of the Scheldt was to be restricted as laid down at the Peace of Munster. Townshend had been placed at a disadvantage in the negotiations because the Dutch had learnt through Louis XIV. of the secret treaty concluded between

[1] Coxe (iii., 21) states that Marlborough was mollified by the grant of the regiment to his trusted subordinate Meredith; this is inaccurate. Essex's Dragoons were given to Lord Temple (April 24th), Meredith a week later received command of the Scots Fusiliers, vacant by Lord Mordaunt's death. (*Cf.* Dalton, vi.)

England and the Archduke Charles which promised England Minorca as a pledge against the expenses incurred on the Archduke's behalf. This was an infringement of the Grand Alliance, which had bound the contracting parties not to obtain any special advantages, and Heinsius took full advantage of the slip. The Barrier Treaty was greatly to the benefit of the Dutch: they obtained great concessions, they committed themselves to nothing, for to the maintenance of the Grand Alliance they were bound by their own interests. The Emperor, however, bitterly resented the disadvantage, political and economic, imposed on the Netherlands: Prussia was equally furious over Guelderland, and, as usual, Marlborough found himself called upon to intervene and by adroit flattery and cajolery kept Frederick firm to the Grand Alliance. He wrote to him that the mere rumour that part of the Prussian contingent was to be withdrawn would be a fatal blow and he begged the irate monarch not to visit on England the sins of the Dutch: "the Queen," he wrote, "takes it very unkindly that the Prince should impute to her any failings or disrespect the States may have shown him."[1]

But the King of Prussia was not the only provider of auxiliaries who troubled Marlborough in the winter of 1709–1710. Charles XII.'s overthrow at Pultowa had aroused the cupidity of all his neighbours. Not Prussia only, but Saxony, Denmark, Holstein, and Hanover were all itching to use their troops to advance their own ends at the expense of the Swedes and were reluctant to furnish their usual contingents to the Allied armies.

[1] Disp., iv., 639.

Stair had to be sent off on a special mission to the Elector of Saxony "to prevent the Northern war from spreading into the Empire," and the Elector of Hanover, chagrined at the failure of the campaign on the Upper Rhine, flatly declined to serve again, though, as Marlborough wrote, "there never was more need of the Empire's exerting itself than at this juncture." What with the sluggishness, greed, and want of zeal of so many of the Allies and his sense of the insecurity of his position at home, Marlborough betook himself to the Netherlands earlier than was his wont, with a heavy heart and some despondency as to the military prospects. Malplaquet had not yielded the fruits he had anticipated and the cost of the victory had made people ask if it was worth while to win such victories since they did not bring the war any nearer an end. Negotiations had been reopened during the winter through the indefatigable Petkum, but when the conferences were resumed at Moerdyke in January, 1710, Louis was as inflexible as ever against the two obnoxious articles of the previous year's negotiations and also demanded compensation for his chief German partisans, the Electors of Bavaria and Cologne. He was prepared to recognize the Archduke as King of Spain, to withdraw his troops from that country and neither himself assist his grandson or permit his subjects to do so, to give up four towns in French Flanders as a security, to let Maubeuge and Tournai and even Lille be included in the Dutch "barrier," to give way over Alsace, the dismantling of Dunkirk and the expulsion of the Stuarts from France, but Spain as before proved the stumbling-block. Moreover, the Allies though all prepared that

some concessions should be made could not agree on any particular concession. The Dutch thought Philip might have Naples and Sicily with Sardinia, against which Savoy protested strongly while Zinzendorf, the Imperial representative, would not consent to give the Bourbons any footing in Italy. Marlborough and Godolphin would have let Philip have Sicily but the Duke soon came to the conclusion that the French, as he had already suspected,[1] were only continuing the negotiations in the hope of sowing dissension among the Allies.[2]

Whatever the truth about the negotiations, Marlborough's personal part in them was unimportant. He had taken the field two months before they were broken off over the question of Spain. His enemies in England, as usual, sought to represent the rupture as his work, whereat Hare waxes most indignant. It is "the Empire that makes the greatest difficulties about peace," he writes, "which nobody can endeavour more than" Marlborough.[3] Torcy[4] agrees in holding Zinzendorf mainly to blame, while the Abbé de Polignac, one of the French representatives, held the Dutch responsible.[5]

Had the campaign of 1710 fulfilled Marlborough's

[1] *Cf.* Disp., iv., 687.

[2] *Cf* Round MSS., p. 348. It may be noticed that Petkum himself believed that France was only "playing with the Allies" and could obtain peace by giving satisfactory guarantees (*ibid.*, p. 349), and that Stair (*Annals*, i., 342) agrees, noticing that the French tone was "more imperious and peremptory" than at any other conference.

[3] Hare MSS., pp. 230–1.

[4] *Cf.* letter of August 10th/21st to Petkum.

[5] *Cf.* Villars, lxx., 319.

hopes Louis could hardly have rejected any terms the Allies chose to lay down. As it had been decided to start the campaign sooner than usual special efforts were made to get forage ready, the recruits, remounts, clothing and other stores from England left for the Continent before the end of February,[1] and Marlborough himself was at The Hague on March 8th. The first objective was Douai, a fortress strong in itself and important through its position on the Scarpe. In the hands of the Allies it would, being in connection by water with Amsterdam, form an admirable advanced base for the invasion of France. Douai taken it was intended to besiege Arras, "the last in the triple line of fortresses which covered the French frontier on the North," while plans were at first laid to surprise Calais, and when this scheme became known a fresh one was devised for a descent on the coast near Abbeville. The idea was that a combination of this landing with the capture of Arras would enable the Allies to isolate Boulogne and Calais, and to establish themselves with a new base on the Channel. Once again Marlborough was seeking to develop the possibilities of "amphibious warfare." Elsewhere the Allies had no extensive designs: on the Rhine they were resolved on a mere defensive, and though in Spain the recall of the French contingent exposed Madrid to an Allied advance from Catalonia no considerable reinforcements had been sent to take advantage of this chance.

On April 1st/12th Marlborough arrived at Tournai, the appointed place of concentration. He was apprehensive lest the unusually early start would involve

[1] Disp., iv., 684–694.

difficulties over subsistence. Bread and forage were scarce. The spring was very late, the winds being dry and easterly and keeping everything backward, but as he wrote (April 8th/19th) "we being one month sooner in the field than naturally we should be the troops must suffer but I hope the common cause will be the better for it." Certainly the French were completely taken aback by this early start; they were awaiting reinforcements from the Rhine, and were quite unable to interfere with the Duke's opening moves.

Douai was no easy place to attack, the Scarpe protected it on the North and from the North-East, while farther East the inundations of the Scheldt below Condé afforded additional protection, more particularly because a flotilla of galleys at Condé gave the French control of the floods. North-Westward a canal ran from the Scarpe below Douai to the Upper Deule near Pont-à-Vendin, whence fortified lines continued in the same direction to La Bassée. In this quarter the French had twenty squadrons and forty battalions under M. de Montesquieu, but their main body lay to the South of Douai, unable to take the field until the green forage should be ready as they had failed to form sufficient magazines of dry forage,[1] and woefully below their establishments, many battalions having no more than 250 men present. Hence the strength of their position availed them but little. Marlborough, starting with one of his usual feats of marching, left Villemeau at 6 P.M. on April 9th/20th, marched all night, and at daybreak reached the La Bassée lines. These the troops passed almost unopposed and, pushing on, by 4

[1] Disp., v., 14.

P.M. that afternoon (April 10th/21st) they were nearing, after a march of thirty miles, Montigny in the plain of Lens. Montesquieu had made off directly Marlborough's vanguard appeared near Pont-à-Vendin, and though Eugene's leading detachment, moving Eastward of the Duke's route, was checked when it tried to cross the canal at Pont Auby, it found passages a little farther West and before nightfall had joined hands with the Duke. Moving on Southward next day (11th/22d) Marlborough crossed the Scarpe near Vitry (South-West of Douai) which compelled the French to decamp hastily in the direction of Arras, leaving tents standing and much baggage behind and powerless to interfere with the completion of the investment on the following day (April 12th/23rd).

Marlborough was much pleased with this good start, and wrote with great satisfaction to the Duchess how completely the French had been surprised, not having expected the Allies for another four days,[1] but he had a tough nut to crack in Douai. The inundations made the place difficult to approach, the fortifications were in good repair, and the garrison of eight thousand men under a resolute commander, the Marquis d'Albergotti, put up a stout defence, making repeated sorties and disputing every yard. Fortunately for the Allies they were able to establish communication by water with Tournai where they had ample magazines, and when French galleys from Condé endeavoured to intercept the convoys as they came up the Scarpe, Marlborough countered them by collecting enough waggons to bring his supplies overland, and also developed a new water

[1] *Cf.* Disp., v., 8.

route from Lille up the Deule and by the canal to Pont Auby.[1] Before long the plight of the defenders compelled Villars to see if he could shake the Allies' hold on the town. He had gathered in reinforcements and was no longer hopelessly outnumbered but when he moved (May 12th/23rd) the Allies had had time, not only to bring up siege guns from Tournai and to open their trenches, but to construct and arm entrenchments across the routes by which he must advance. Villars manœuvred with his usual skill, feinting first to the East, countermarching rapidly West under cover of this demonstration and advancing into the plain of Lens, only to find the Allies in his path, well-posted and well-provided with guns (May 16th/27th). For a moment it seemed as if Villars were going to risk an attack, but after "gasconading all day at a distance" he drew off at night. An advance down the Scarpe from Fampoux (May 21st/June 1st), a swift march to his right towards Arleux (June 5th/16th) were alike unavailing: Marlborough was always ready. Indeed, so confident was he that the troops whom Eugene had lent to reinforce the covering army were sent back to press the siege. He was not wrong in his calculations. Villars, knowing that his army was the last France could muster, dared not attack: he could not hope to achieve more than the Allies had done at Malplaquet if he assaulted a prepared position, and a Malplaquet would have spelt ruin to the French army while considerable reinforcements of Hessians, Prussians, and Palatiners[2] were due to join the Allies. So Villars had to fall back across the Scarpe and take post to cover

[1] Disp., v., 13–21.

[2] Disp., v., 22 and 35.

Arras, and Albergotti, having held out for two months and till his garrison was reduced to barely half its original strength, capitulated on June 15th/26th. His defence had cost the Allies dear, over 8000 casualties.[1] Moreover he had saved Arras, for, if Villars was too weak to attack, his new position was too strong and too strongly held to be attacked,[2] unless the Allies were prepared for the losses of another Malplaquet. There had been times when Marlborough would not have hesitated to attack, but in 1710 he had to proceed with circumspection lest a check or a heavy casualty list should give his watchful enemies at home a handle against him. Therefore he moved away from the ground which was to see the great battle which began on April 9, 1917, and passing over the Vimy Ridge (June 29th/July 10th) he took post at Villers-Brûlin to cover the siege of Béthune. He took this step because to capture Béthune, though less important than to take Arras, would improve his communications with Flanders by way of the Lys, would facilitate the reduction of Aire and St. Venant, and thereby further the projected move to the Channel coast and the isolation of Boulogne and Calais.[3]

Béthune accordingly was invested on July 4th/15th. The garrison defended themselves stoutly and if the Allies made progress it was at no light cost. However, Villars was impotent to save Béthune. The Allies' covering army was so well entrenched that a much

[1] Of these the British suffered 570 killed and 1337 wounded.

[2] He had now 260 squadrons and 180 battalions (*Mémoires*, lxx., 323), though much below establishment.

[3] *Cf.* Kane, p. 86.

weaker force could have held the frontier securely and Villars himself declares he had orders not to attack.[1] He was devoting himself instead to the construction of those lines which were to become famous as the *non plus ultra* which failed to stop Marlborough. Efforts to intercept the convoys from Douai were ineffective and on August 17th/28th Béthune surrendered. With two months of the normal campaigning season still before him Marlborough at first contemplated a move on Calais, but he had his doubts about getting the necessary supplies from the ministers who had just come into power at home and it was a little late in the year for the all-important naval co-operation. Godolphin had urged the move against Calais strongly as likely to bring on a general engagement with Villars, but Marlborough had too clear a perception of the difficulties which handicapped his great opponent to expect such a result, and he feared that an attack on Calais before his communications with Flanders were completely secured would merely expose his flank to Villars. Accordingly the more brilliant project was dropped for the more commonplace but nevertheless useful task of securing the navigation of the Lys by reducing Aire and St. Venant. A covering position was taken up from the Lys near Therouenne to Lillers and in the first week of September the two sieges were simultaneously begun. Of the two St. Venant, though hard to approach by reason of marshes, was but a weak place and fell after a fortnight's siege (September 18th/29th). Aire, however, "very strong by art and nature," and ably defended by a valiant commander, Guébriant, held out

[1] Villars, lxx., p. 328.

unexpectedly long. Heavy rains impeded the operations: "our poor men," the Duke wrote, "are up to the knees in mud and water which is a most grievous sight and will occasion great sickness,"[1] but the French main army never stirred from behind the lines along the Sensée to which it had retired when Douai fell. Villars owing to ill-health had handed over his command to Marshall d'Harcourt midway through September and his successor resigned himself to the defensive with much less reluctance than had the more energetic Villars. On October 28th/November 8th just as the breaches had been pronounced practicable Aire surrendered and with its fall the campaign ended. If once again Marlborough's highest hopes had been unfulfilled substantial advantages had been obtained. Douai, Béthune, Aire, and St. Venant amounted to a serious breach in the fortress barrier which guarded the North-Eastern frontier of France, the Allies had enormously improved their prospects for the next campaign, for the reduction of Aire had given them control of the Lys, while the Scheldt and Scarpe as far as Douai they already controlled; they had thus gained "a great front which would make it much more difficult for the French to prepare for them or stop them, than if they were tied down to one route only."[2] Marlborough would thus find plenty of room for manœuvring when he came to try conclusions with Villars and his *non plus ultra* lines.

The military situation was therefore full of promise, even if the shortcomings of several of the Allies caused serious anxiety. There is a long letter from the Duke

[1] Disp., v, 200.

[2] Cf. *Management of the War*, ii., 25.

to St. John, now Secretary of State, written in December and complaining of the Emperor's failure to support his brother, to which was largely due the disastrous turn things had taken in Spain. After initial successes the Allies had had to evacuate Madrid, and as they retired on Catalonia the British contingent while acting as rear-guard were brought to action at Brihuega and forced to capitulate (November 28th/December 9th). But the Emperor was not alone in his shortcomings, the Dutch needed fully as much to be kept up to the mark. Their neglect to provide bread and forage for the Imperial and Palatinate contingents who were due to winter in the Netherlands caused him to write a strongly worded letter[1] pointing out that if these troops were not properly supplied they would march home, "and in that case cannot be expected to return in any reasonable time, if at all," while the loss of so large a number of troops would compel the Allies to abandon their offensive projects, to put themselves on the defensive, and thereby "run the hazard of being defeated of our just expectations from so long and expensive a war."

Something of Marlborough's principal cause for anxiety may be detected in this last sentence. His victories had brought the Allies within measurable distance of being able to dictate peace, but the recent changes in England had made it an open question whether he would be given the chance to put the coping stone on his work. While he was besieging Béthune the blow had fallen. On August 8th/19th after a stormy interview with Anne, Godolphin had been dis-

[1] Disp., v., 226.

missed. The Sacheverell episode had given Anne the encouragement she needed and the tactless conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough in forcing her way into the Queen's presence against orders had brought to a head the quarrel between Anne and her old confidant. On April 6th the Duchess had had a final and most stormy audience of the Queen; within a week the Earl of Kent had been replaced as Lord Chamberlain by Shrewsbury. Godolphin was annoyed, for Shrewsbury had supported Sacheverell, but Shrewsbury showed himself so conciliatory that Godolphin was induced to withdraw the resignation he had sent in. Trouble then occurred over a question of promotion. Anne was determined to have Jack Hill, Mrs. Masham's brother, made a Brigadier and to get him this advancement insisted on the promotion to Brigadier of all the Colonels of 1705. Marlborough protested, but was left unsupported by his Whig colleagues and had to give way. Straws like this showed how the wind was blowing.

In June a more pronounced measure was taken by the removal of Sunderland from office. This, coupled with the choice of Dartmouth as his successor, was a distinct affront to the Whigs, and Marlborough, in writing to congratulate the new Secretary, could not but add, "you will naturally believe, from the relation he [Sunderland] bears to me, I cannot be without concern for the change." Indeed the other ministers were so alarmed that the Duke might make his son-in-law's dismissal the pretext for resigning that, with the exception of Shrewsbury and Somerset, they signed a petition begging him not to resign (June 14th), while the Em-

peror wrote to the Queen, declaring Marlborough's retention in command indispensable.

But Anne, if slow to move, was not to be lightly dissuaded once she had made up her mind. For two years past, Joanna Cutts wrote in August, 1710,[1] she had "been convinced that my Lord Marlborough, my Lady, and the Junto were her enemies and dangerous to her interests and the constitution." She could see that the Whigs were not harmonious, Somerset and the more moderate among them were playing for their own hands, and Somers, the only member of the Junto for whom Marlborough had any respect, was disposed to be jealous of the Duke and to think his power immoderate. Encouraged by the obvious Tory reaction in the country, by Godolphin's inability to resist the dismissal from minor posts of one after another of his adherents, the Queen at last plucked up courage to dismiss Godolphin himself.

The fall of the colleague with whom he had worked in the closest harmony for so long was indeed a blow to Marlborough. He wrote to Halifax[2]: "I leave you to judge by what you yourself felt at the dismission of Lord Godolphin, for whom I know you had a real friendship and value, how much I must have been mortified and afflicted at so unexpected a blow. . . . However, I am resolved nothing shall lessen my zeal for the public, nor my endeavours to carry on the war with all possible vigour." Any idea he may have entertained of resigning had been put out of his mind by Godolphin, who implored him to retain his post, and just at first Harley, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, was in no

[1] Checquers Court MSS., p. 201. [2] Disp., iv., 139.

hurry to turn all the old ministers out of office, still less to break with the Duke. However, his inclination to moderate measures was not shared by his chief supporters. The Tories clamoured for a dissolution and about six weeks after Godolphin's fall a dissolution was ordered.

The sweeping success of the Tories at the election of 1710 was the more remarkable in view of the great achievements with which the Whig ministers had been associated. Over 270 members lost their seats and the new House of Commons was predominantly Tory in composition. Neither the Whigs themselves nor Marlborough had expected anything like this crushing defeat. Weariness of the war and of its cost, impatience with victories which seemed to bring peace no nearer, the unpopularity of individual ministers, the strong High Church reaction, all these contributed to the rout of the Whigs. Something too must be allowed for the influence of Tory protests against the Whig monopoly of power and the exclusion from office and the service of their country of leading Tories; the system of "the Ins and Outs" to which modern party government has accustomed later generations had not yet established itself. The loss by Marlborough and his friends of Royal favour, Mrs. Masham's influence over Anne, the Queen's revulsion from her old favourite, the Duchess of Marlborough, all these played their part. Marlborough's own ill-advised request for the Captain-Generalship for life had been turned to advantage by his enemies, and the allegation, sedulously spread abroad by the pens which Harley hastened to enlist under the Tory banner, that the Duke desired the con-

tinuance of the war for the sake of the profits and emoluments of command was not without its effect. But though Marlborough's position had been gravely shaken not even the completeness of the Tory victory disposed Harley to proceed to the extreme step of advising the Queen to dismiss him. Indeed if he would have accepted Harley's conditions the minister would have gladly entered into close relations with him. These overtures Marlborough declined. He did not trust Harley, still less his chief colleague St. John. For the moment, however, he retained his place, though even before the campaign ended the new ministers were sending him orders about which he had not been consulted. St. John's letters were assuming a peremptory and dictatorial tone, the Duke's friends were being ousted from places and preferments. Cardonnel, his former secretary, was replaced as Secretary at War by Granville, Cadogan was deprived of his post as Envoy to the United Provinces, and a particularly pointed insult was the cashiering of Macartney, Meredith, and Honywood, three of his most trusted subordinates, on a charge of having drunk the toast of "damnation and confusion to the new ministry."

Marlborough returned to England therefore (December 28th/January 8th) in no friendly mood to the new ministry. He had written to the Duke of Bedford in October[1]: "Your Grace cannot but believe I am sensibly afflicted at what has passed of late and is still carrying on in England, especially at a juncture . . . when we ought to be most united for the welfare of our country." He had already let Harley know that he was ready to

[1] Disp., v., 29.

"live with him"[1] if Harley would make this possible, but he was much annoyed by the affronts put upon him, and the reception he met at Court, though he was warmly received by the crowd, was calculated to embitter him. The Queen began by telling him not to allow a vote of thanks to be moved in Parliament for the last campaign as her ministers would oppose it, and though Harley and Shrewsbury professed themselves ready to support him they declared he must "draw a line between all that hath passed and that is to come . . . and begin entirely on a new footing." The government was for the moment inclined to prosecute the war vigorously, only it expected the Allies to do more for the common cause,[2] and to part with the Duke would have hardly reassured the Dutch, already very nervous at the change in England. Drummond, a Scottish banker resident at Amsterdam, a friend and correspondent of Harley's, wrote to the minister in November, 1710,[3] of the anxiety of the States-General that the Duke should be continued at the head of the army, since "the whole alliance was easy under his conduct, that the States were used to him and though they knew his faults as well as his virtues, there was nobody they would either prefer or desire equally with him." In another letter Drummond urged that "his success in the field, his capacity or rather dexterity in council . . . and his personal acquaintance with the heads of the Alliance, and the faith they have in him make him still the great man with them and on whom they depend." "You will have but little money to expect

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 634.

[2] Disp., v., 235.

[3] Portland MSS., iv., 618.

from this," he warned Harley, "if he stay at home." The envoy of the Elector of Saxony had announced publicly that his master would withdraw his contingent should the Duke not be in command, while Pensionary Buys, Drummond wrote, came to him almost with tears in his eyes, saying: "Lord! what shall become of us? Lord Rivers would give me no satisfaction that the Duke shall return. For God's sake write to all your friends, let him but return for one campaign till the French but make new proposals" (*ibid.*, iv., 619-664).

The ministry, therefore, though already contemplating re-opening negotiations were anxious to avoid a definite breach with "the commander to whom the successes of this war have been so generally ascribed both by friends and foes." However, when on January 17th/28th Marlborough obtained an audience of the Queen and presented a letter from the Duchess asking for a reconciliation he found the Queen obstinacy itself. She flatly declined to meet the Duke's wishes in the matter of the three officers recently degraded, and despite his remonstrances and pleadings peremptorily demanded the immediate return of the Duchess's keys of office. Marlborough retired from her presence discomforted, and contemplated immediate resignation. From this step he was dissuaded, partly by Godolphin, though what weighed most with him, for on this point there is no reason to doubt the Duchess, was the representations of Eugene who expressed the greatest alarm at the prospect of losing Marlborough's assistance.

Marlborough's decision to retain his command has been adversely criticized by Coxe who writes, "in an

evil hour he yielded to these representations," but it would have been greatly to his discredit had he allowed personal resentment to sway him. There was every chance that the coming campaign would complete the work which he and Eugene had been building stage by stage, that the full fruits of victory would at last be reaped. Much as he distrusted Harley and St. John he would hardly have been justified in not believing the repeated assurances of Harley's desire "to live and act with the Duke in the same manner and with the same easiness as the first day that ever I saw him."[1] It has been suggested[2] that he was influenced by the fear that if he threw up the command the payments for the completion of Blenheim might be withheld. His letters to Harley during the year certainly contain expressions of gratitude to that minister for the continuation of the work.[3] Still they do not bear out the suggestion that "the completion of Blenheim was the price" by which the Duke's opposition to peace was to be bought off. Anne's letters to Oxford[4] show that the Duke was kept in ignorance of the negotiations,[5] and all through 1711 he wrote under the impression[6] that peace was to be extorted from France by the further successes in the field which he hoped to win. Moreover, the £6,000,000 which the new House of Commons was induced to vote for the coming year was a reasonable proof of the ministry's good intentions. The Duke therefore prepared for another campaign though his enemies utilized

[1] Portland MSS., iv., 634.
[2] *Cf.* Bath MSS., Introd., p. xi.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 203–209.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 216.
[5] *Vide infra*, p. 459.
[6] *Cf.* Bath MSS., p. 108.

an inquiry ordered by the Lords into the operations in Spain to censure him indirectly. Peterborough, being examined before the commission, had attributed the blame for the Toulon fiasco of 1707 to Galway. Marlborough declared that the war in Spain had always been "managed on its own bottom," and had if anything helped the expedition to Toulon by occupying French troops. The expedition to Naples, he assured the House, had been responsible for the failure. But the Lords, undeterred by his explanations, carried a vote of censure on the late ministry and voted their thanks to Peterborough. Nor was this all. Egged on by the extreme party among their supporters who were anxious to proceed further against the Whigs, the ministry appointed a commission to inquire into the public accounts, in the hopes of bringing peculation and malversation to Marlborough's door. Further, they were already moving in the direction of opening separate negotiations with France. Immediately Sunderland fell Torcy had instructed Gaultier, formerly Tallard's chaplain during his embassy to William III. in 1698, who had continued to reside in London and acted as a French agent, to approach Lord Jersey and through him to get into touch with the new ministry. Marlborough had noted in October[1] a somewhat altered tone in Torcy's letters for which Gaultier's correspondence with Torcy[2] provided ample justification. These letters had contained assurances of the friendly sentiments of the new ministers towards the exiled Prince of Wales

[1] Disp., v., 177.

[2] Quoted from the Archives des Affaires Étrangères in Stanhope's *Queen Anne*, ii., pp. 203-206.

and hints of a disposition to resume negotiations. Even before Marlborough left for The Hague at the beginning of March, 1711, Gaultier had made his way to Versailles, and had communicated to Torcy the desire of the English government for peace.[1]

[1] Cf. *Mémoires de Torcy*, iii., 20-21.

CHAPTER XIX

"NON PLUS ULTRA"

VILLARS'S LINES—THE DEATH OF JOSEPH I.—MARLBOROUGH'S MANŒUVRES—ARLEUX—THE PIERCING OF THE LINES—SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF BOUCHAIN.

THE situation of the French when operations began in 1711 was far from favourable. The captures effected by the Allies in the preceding years had made a great breach in the fortress barrier which covered France on her vulnerable North-Eastern frontier. If on the West Calais and Boulogne were still protected by a barrier which included Dunkirk, Ypres, and St. Omer, and on the East Valenciennes, Maubeuge, and Le Quesnoy restricted the movements of the Allies, between these their advance had brought them up to the last line of defence. The fall of Arras or of Cambrai would open a path into undefended country. The work of removing the frontier further from Paris, the great achievement of the early days of Louis XIV., had been practically undone. Marlborough was now at the inner gates of France.

To guard against this danger Villars had devoted all his efforts during the previous autumn and winter to constructing an elaborate system of field-fortifications, stretching practically from the Channel to the Meuse. On the left (Western) end these followed the Canche with Montreuil, Hesdin, and Frévent as supports and the bastion of the Pas de Calais and the remaining fortresses of French Flanders jutting out in front. From the Canche a series of works ran across to the Gy

ending at Montenescourt about six miles from Arras. The Gy and the Scarpe, which the Gy joins near Duisans, had been dammed so as to inundate the country on their banks as far as Biache St. Vaast. Thence to the marshes and inundations of the Sensée at Ecluse ran a canal, while from Ecluse to Bouchain the Sensée formed a formidable barrier. Bouchain, itself a fortress of some strength, was situated at the junction of the Sensée with the Scheldt which river connected Bouchain with Valenciennes. From Valenciennes entrenchments, with the fortresses of Le Quesnoy and Landrecies behind them, stretched away to the Sambre, on which river Maubeuge and Charleroi were strongholds of importance connecting up with the Meuse at Namur. At certain points along this front, notably at Athies, Fampoux, Arleux, and Biache, passages over the inundations existed but had been strongly fortified, and what with the field-works and the inundations these *non plus ultra* lines were indeed formidable.

Marlborough and Eugene, however, had reasonable hopes of overcoming this obstacle. Villars, even though he had urged on Louis the concentration in French Flanders of all available forces at the expense of Savoy and Alsace, could not hope to put into the field more than 227 squadrons and 156 battalions, whereas the Allies amounted originally to 341 squadrons and 185 battalions and were considerably superior in artillery. With so long a line to defend Villars must either be weak everywhere or leave certain points lightly held, and it would go hard if Marlborough and his colleague could not by feint and stratagem find out the weak points in their adversary's armour and utilize their

numerical superiority to delude him by attacking simultaneously at more than one point. Preparations were as usual vigorously pushed: large magazines were collected at Tournai ready to be moved by water to Douai, enough forage was provided to subsist the army for five weeks until the new grass became available, reinforcements and recruits were sent over from England in March, and all was in train for an early beginning of the campaign. But the usual troubles arose. The King of Prussia refused to let his troops move till he had had "satisfaction in his pretensions upon the Queen and the States."[1] The course of events in the Baltic arising out of the collapse of Swedish power induced the German states to decide on forming an army of observation to protect the neutrality of the Empire, and eight Palatine battalions in English or Dutch pay were withdrawn to join this corps, while a little later the Elector of Saxony, dreading an invasion of his territories, recalled his own contingent. "The whim of recalling troops goes round," wrote one of Drummond's correspondents bitterly.[2] "The Elector Palatine is at it now. . . . The King of Prussia owes us a great deal of reparation for beginning this prank." But just when Marlborough was writing that what with the necessity of finding garrisons for the places taken in 1710 and the formation of the "corps of neutrality" his army was going to be reduced, "whereas considering the great efforts of the enemy we ought rather to be stronger,"[3] the English ministry went out of their way

[1] Disp., v., 283; *cf.* 310: these pretensions were the Prussian claims to Orange, Neuchâtel, and Guelders.

[2] Portland MSS., v., 33.

[3] Bath MSS., i., 200.

to withdraw five of his British battalions for an expedition to Canada under command of Brigadier Hill, Mrs. Masham's brother. This expedition is a classical example of the unwisdom of detaching from the main theatre of war troops who can ill be spared for a venture which, even if successful, could effect nothing decisive. Canada, already isolated by British command of the sea, was no source of danger either as a base for privateers or for attacks on the British colonies; its fate could be more effectively settled between Arras and Cambrai than at Quebec and, even apart from the total failure of the expedition and its heavy losses by shipwreck, it was unsound.

But worse was in store. As the British troops were moving from Ghent to the Allied rendezvous near Douai, to be there by the end of April, there came the startling news that the Emperor Joseph had died from small-pox on April 17th. The removal of this prince, a firm supporter of the Duke's and a man of no little ability, was most important. His death left his brother Charles as heir to all the Hapsburg dominions and thus cut the ground from under the feet of an Alliance which, having been formed to resist the union of France and Spain, could hardly continue the war to reunite the dominions of Charles V. under one ruler. The Allies had no obvious candidate for Spain, though Marlborough seems to have contemplated pressing the Duke of Savoy's claims, but what was even more serious was that Eugene was called off to command an Imperial army which was now collected on the Rhine to protect the deliberations of the Diet at Frankfurt am Main. It was rumoured that the French contem-

plated sending the Elector of Bavaria into Germany in the hope of "kindling the war again in the heart of Germany," but even if this project was never serious the mere rumour was enough to alarm the Diet and to cause Eugene's withdrawal from the Netherlands. Nor was this all. Despite Marlborough's protests[1] when Eugene finally moved off to the Rhine the Imperial and Palatine contingents accompanied him. Reduced to 145 squadrons and 94 battalions (Parker), Marlborough found himself at the beginning of June actually inferior to Villars.[2] The prospects of any considerable success against the *non plus ultra* lines seemed faint.

Up to this point nothing had been accomplished, though the main army had been in the field over a month. It had assembled between Lille and Douai at the end of April with headquarters at Orchies and had moved thence to a position South of Douai, facing Villars whose army lay spread out from near Bouchain to Monchy le Preux, destined to be one day a familiar name to English ears. The inundations of the Sensée separated the opposing forces and though Marlborough was able to stop the French from damming the Sensée at Arleux, their aim being to "overflow the river and prevent the waters coming down to Douai,"[3] he could not bring on a battle. "Miserable wet" weather handicapped him and the communications of the Allies were the more liable to attack because of the advanced positions held by the French at the extremities of their

[1] *Cf.* Disp., v., 320.

[2] Millner's figures make Marlborough equal if not slightly superior in cavalry but decidedly inferior in infantry to his adversary.

[3] Disp., v., 300.

lines which roughly took the shape of a crescent with the St. Omer-Calais group of fortresses projecting on the left and the Bouchain-Valenciennes-Maubeuge group on the right. However, the Allies managed to protect their convoys and though Marlborough wrote towards the end of May, "our chief business at present is to subsist," Villars was equally straitened for supplies and had to scatter his cavalry at some distance in rear of his lines in order to obtain forage. An attack of "dizziness in the head" incapacitated Marlborough for some time but on June 2nd/13th, the day that Eugene finally departed for Germany, the Duke set his troops in motion Westward, crossing the Scarpe above Douai and moving into the plain of Lens where, after a march in such great heat that many men fell dead on the road,[1] he took post looking up towards the Vimy Ridge. This was intended as a challenge to Villars who, though he had detached 40 squadrons and 36 battalions to the Rhine, was still 40 squadrons and 16 battalions stronger than the Duke.[2] The Allies fully expected that Villars, being in superior force and "an enterprising man," would "do something very extraordinary," but he remained inactive, merely shifting a little to his left, bringing his right to Biache St. Vaast and his centre to Fampoux. The Duke's enemies, Parker tells us, were beginning to talk, declaring that "he could do nothing without Prince Eugene," but though the Duke's hopes of decisive success had been dashed by his colleague's departure he had not reconciled himself to inactivity and was laying his plans for the capture of Bouchain.

Bouchain, lying at the confluence of the Sensée and

[1] Millner, p. 317. [2] Parker, p. 178.

the Scheldt, was exceedingly difficult to approach and the possession of the triangular piece of ground between those rivers which has as its base-line the road from Cambrai to Aubanchoeuil-au-Bac and Aubigny was a necessary preliminary. To secure this the inundations must be crossed and they were only passable by the causeways "made for the convenience of the country-people"[1] at Aubigny and at Arleux. To obtain possession of these would not be difficult, but Marlborough saw that an attack on them followed by an immediate advance over the floods would probably bring Villars to the spot before enough troops could be pushed across to secure a footing beyond, while to debouch from the causeways in face of Villars's main force would be impossible. It was essential to have the causeways open for passage but also to draw Villars's main body right away from that end of the lines. With this purpose Marlborough must move West and make all possible show of intending an attack nearer Arras, then, once he had drawn Villars West he must double back quickly towards Bouchain. But to capture Arleux and clear the passage before moving West would betray his real intention. What the Duke designed was therefore most subtle. In Kane's words he planned:

> to have Villars demolish it himself. He saw he could take it when he pleased and demolish it . . . but he knew that as soon as he was marched from thence Villars would soon come and rebuild it, but should he pretend to fortify it, then he expected as soon as he was marched away Villars would come and retake it and demolish it.

[1] Parker, p. 176.

All fell out as Marlborough planned. On June 25th/July 6th Arleux was successfully attacked by night. The captured position was strengthened, the sluices were reopened and the water which had been diverted from the Sensée into the canal was allowed to resume its natural course to Douai, "where it began to be mightily wanted." Villars retorted by a sudden attack about daybreak on July 1st/12th: this, though repulsed at Arleux, caught by surprise a supporting detachment under the Prussian general Hompesch posted at Goeulzin, half way to Douai. Hompesch's outposts had retired into the shelter of a château and so allowed the French who had crossed at Aubigny to catch the detachment in its beds.[1] The French, at first completely successful, fell to plundering and the Allied troops, headed by the Buffs,[2] turned out in their shirts and drove the French off. Villars, however, was not a little encouraged by the episode, "the only affront," Kane notes, "the Duke received during the whole war." Marlborough accordingly pushed on the strengthening of the Arleux works and then on July 9th/20th started Westward, leaving a garrison at Arleux. This move brought the Allies well to the North-West of Arras, almost to the source of the Lys between Estrée Blanche on the Quette and Marle on the Clarence,[3] and Villars hastened to follow suit and to shift to his left. Before starting off, however, he detached a strong column under Montesquieu to deal with Arleux (July 12th/23d). Marlborough was already three marches gone on the Westward

[1] Disp., v., 408.

[2] Portland MSS., v., 27.

[3] Portland MSS., v., 44.

road when an urgent message from Arleux reached him, announcing the attack and imploring succour. A relieving force was at once detailed under Cadogan, but long before it had retraced half the distance to Arleux news arrived that the post had fallen. Parker notes that Cadogan "took not such haste as the occasion seemed to require" and the extreme annoyance which the Duke openly expressed on hearing of the fall of Arleux was probably simulated. Certainly the whole army was surprised to find their commander, usually the embodiment of calm and self-control, giving vent to angry words. Parker writes that the Duke said publicly in a sort of passion "that he would be even with Villars," Kane adds that he "seemed very peevish and would see but little company and seemingly resolved on attacking Villars."

For the moment the Duke's actions could only be interpreted as an intention to take the bull by the horns and hurl his troops at the French lines between Arras and Hesdin. The prospect filled the army with consternation. This part of the lines was "prodigious strong with a double faussée" (Kane) and the ground in front had been levelled and cleared of everything that might be any kind of shelter.[1] Consternation was further increased when, under pretext of protecting Brabant and Brussels against threatened inroads by the French garrison of Maubeuge,[2] Lord Albemarle was sent off with 24 squadrons and 12 battalions to Béthune while yet another detachment was dispatched to escort the baggage and the guns back to Douai (July 17th/28th). This last step filled full the army's

[1] Parker, p. 181.

[2] *Cf.* Hare MSS., p. 231.

cup of surprise. To send off the guns on the eve of an assault on formidable entrenchments was inexplicable. "I confess," wrote Drummond's correspondent, Watkins, "our affairs have not, since the war has been half a year old, had so melancholy a face." "Gloom hung on every countenance," writes Kane (p. 92), "reduced by various detachments and destitute of artillery it appeared madness to attack an enemy superior in numbers and entrenched behind lines bristling with cannon." Small wonder if Villars wrote to his master that he had brought the Duke to his *non plus ultra*, and, preparing to give the Allies the warmest possible reception, drained the garrisons of Arras and Cambrai and other places for reinforcements. Among the detachments he called to join him was that which had been holding Arleux, the fortifications of which they razed to the ground before they left.

On July 21st/August 1st Marlborough began moving forward as though to attack Villars. That night he was near Houdain, thence he advanced to Villers Brûlin and on July 24th/August 4th carried out a most careful reconnaissance of the French lines, assigning to each commander the part his troops were to play in the next day's attack. His subordinates could not quite believe that their trusted commander meant to commit the elementary blunder of an attack under conditions which made failure certain. "For all this," wrote one of them, "we still had hopes that the Duke had some thing in his head more than we could penetrate into." (Parker.)

Among the few in the Duke's confidence was his chaplain. That very afternoon Hare was writing: "Our mo-

tions have alarmed M. Villars so much that he has drawn all the troops within reach on this side between Arras and Hedin and his troops are perpetually under arms. We are to march this evening, in appearance to attack him, but by the morning he will find he is duped." There had been no little method in Marlborough's apparent madness. The detachments whose departure had filled his army with such misgivings were only advanced guards and were already moving on Arleux.

At nine o'clock that evening tents were struck and the main army drew up, but when the order to advance came instead of moving forward to the French lines the columns turned off to the left and soon were pressing East as fast as their legs could carry them. Their route lay across ground to be familiar to their successors two hundred years later by Villers-aux-Bois, by Neuville, St. Vaast, past the Southern end of the Vimy Ridge, by Thelus and Gavrelle, till shortly after sunrise on July 25th/August 5th they found themselves reaching the Scarpe at Vitry. Here pontoons were already laid for their passage and they caught up the field-guns and their escort who had left camp twenty-four hours before them. They knew now that they were tricking Villars and that their commander was not failing them and the knowledge made them step out bravely for all the weary miles they had come. "We had the finest night in the world to march in," writes Hare, and Parker notes that Marlborough had chosen a full moon since in the dark the move could never had been carried out.

And while the main army had been pushing steadily

[1] Portland MSS., v., 62.

on the advanced detachments had done their work. Cadogan, who had slipped off from Marlborough's camp during the afternoon of July 24th/August 4th, had reached Douai before dark, by three in the morning he had crossed the Arleux causeway unopposed, with two thousand horsemen and twenty battalions from the Douai garrison, and a messenger was galloping Westward to carry the news to the Duke. The message reached Marlborough just as he and the cavalry of the left wing who were leading the march reached the Scarpe. He at once hastened forward and by eight o'clock had crossed the inundations at Aubanchoeuil and was forming his cavalry into line South of the Sensée. Scarcely had he done this than Villars appeared at the head of a body of horse, only to realize that he was too late and that the Duke had tricked him.

Villars's discomfiture was indeed complete. He had first heard rumours of the direction of Marlborough's march about two hours after the Duke started, but hearing simultaneously of an Allied move against his left, on which errand a detachment of horse had been told off, had naturally waited till confirmatory information came in and had not received this till 2 A M. Thus by the time the French got on the move the Duke had gained a start which they could not make up, though at one time the leading Allied infantry and the foremost of the French horse were marching level at about half cannon shot on either side the Scarpe.[1] Thus the "race between the two armies, trying who should first come up with Cadogan," as Kane describes it, ended in

[1] Parker, p. 184.

a great and almost bloodless success for the Duke. He had justified the confidence in his capacity to achieve success which he had expressed to Albemarle, who had pronounced the enterprise dangerous in the extreme.[1] But if the commander who planned the manœuvre and outwitted Villars deserves all possible credit for the skill with which once again he had mystified, misled, and deceived no mean opponent, hardly less credit is due to the troops. Marlborough wrote to Harley in warm praise of their zeal and resolution,[2] and they had indeed accomplished a great feat of marching. To cover, as most of them did, thirteen leagues in eighteen hours, carrying a load of fifty pounds a man, more than half the march under an August sun, was a great achievement. Small wonder if nearly half the 18th Royal Irish dropped behind[3] and if, as Kane says, stragglers were coming in all through the next two days.

Eugene was delighted with his colleague's achievement. "Your Highness has penetrated the *non plus ultra*," was his triumphant cry; he knew well the merit of the action; St. John's verdict was cordiality itself, "You have obtained, without losing a man, such an advantage as we should have bought with the loss of several thousand lives and have reckoned ourselves gainers."[4] Yet the success did not lead to the battle Marlborough had hoped would follow. He himself was so exhausted that on July 27th/August 7th he had to take to his bed for a few days; "I must confess to you," he wrote, "the last six weeks have given me frequent and sensible remembrances of my growing old,"[5] and the position

[1] Portland MSS., v., 62. [2] Bath MSS., i., 206.
[3] *Cf.* Parker. [4] Disp., v., 429. [5] *Ibid.*, v, 433.

which Villars hastened to take up near Cambrai[1] was too strong to be attacked without jeopardizing the advantage of having forced the lines, though for once the Dutch Deputies were urgent for battle.[2] But Villars was powerless to prevent Marlborough from forming the siege of Bouchain (July 29th/August 9th) or from executing a move across the French front to take up a position on the right (Eastern) bank of the Scheldt, from which to cover the siege. Marlborough had certainly hoped to tempt Villars to attack, and he wrote to Harley,[3] "I ought not to conceal it from you that by reason of the enemy's superiority our future operations must be attended with great difficulties. The most effectual means to remove them will be to bring the enemy to a battle." Political enemies accused the Duke of having missed a chance of a battle but his letter to Heinsius[4] effectually answers his critics.

I own, had it been practicable, there is no comparison between the advantages of a battle and what we can reap by a siege, but there is not one general or other officer that has the least judgment in these matters but must allow it was altogether impossible to attack the enemy with any probable hope of success.

The siege of Bouchain, to which Marlborough now devoted his energies was no easy matter; Pendlebury, Marlborough's Master-Gunner, wrote that the Duke

[1] Practically across the Bourlon Wood battlefield of November and December, 1917.

[2] Villars himself admits (*Mem.*, lxx., 353) that his flanks were all covered.

[3] Bath MSS., i., 206. [4] Disp., v., 443.

and Cadogan alone believed the capture possible.[1] The inundations of the Scheldt effectually protected the town on the Eastward and Villars, who took post between the Scheldt and the Sensée "as near Bouchain as the morass and the Duke's army would permit him,"[2] showed every intention of interfering. A French detachment crossed to the left of the Sensée and occupied Wavrechin, where it threw up an entrenchment running to Marquette and thence back to the Sensée at Wannes-au-bac and commanding with artillery the approach to Bouchain from Douai. The besiegers were about to attack this position when a personal reconnaissance showed Marlborough that Villars had a strong reinforcement "lurking in ambush in the bottom, just at the foot of the hill in their rear" and ready to sustain the advanced detachment in the Wavrechin lines. Parker, whose regiment was in the detachment told off the attack, described how Marlborough came up to carry out his reconnaissance from the position when the Royal Irish were lying ready to attack.

> It is quite impossible [he says] to express the joy which the sight of this man gave me at this critical moment. I was now well satisfied that he would not push the thing unless he saw a strong probability of success. Nor was this my notion alone, it was the sense of the whole army, both officer and soldier, British and foreign. And indeed we had all the reason in the world for it, for he never led us to any one action that we did not succeed in.

The attack was accordingly countermanded but thanks to the skill and energy of Colonel Armstrong, Marl-

[1] Portland MSS., v., 63. [2] Kane, p. 97.

borough's chief engineer, fortifications were thrown up in the course of a single night facing Wavrechin which effectually covered the right of the besiegers and cut communications between Wavrechin and Bouchain. Meanwhile by bridging the Scheldt below Bouchain Marlborough secured communications with Douai and Marchiennes[1] and though Villars crossed to the right of the Scheldt he found the Allied lines between Haspres and Iwuy too strong to be attacked, nor could his troops from Condé and Valenciennes succeed in preventing the arrival of the Allied battering-train from Tournai (August 10th/21st).

Once the guns had arrived the siege proceeded rapidly. Trenches were opened on August 12th/23rd, a week later the bombardment began, in another eight days breaching batteries were being established close to the walls. Villars remained a helpless spectator, as Marlborough wrote.[2] He knew that Bouchain would open to the Allies "a passage into the Kingdom of France" (Parker), but he knew also that France had no other army and his men were in bad condition, discouraged, weary, slack, "je ne trouvais plus le caractère national," he wrote; it added to his chagrin that the Allies had seized and were using magazines he had collected for an attack on Douai[3] but he dared not risk an attack. By September 3rd/14th two breaches were practicable and the garrison had no option but to capitulate. The capture had cost the Allies four thousand casualties, over a quarter of them British, but considering its great difficulties Brodrick was not with-

[1] Disp., iv., 437.
[2] *Ibid.*, v., 490.
[3] Portland MSS., v., 64.

out warrant for calling the siege "the best conducted we have made this war." Villars has expressed himself[1] as surprised that the Allies contented themselves with repairing Bouchain and pushed their success no further. His knowledge of the deficiencies of his own army made him apprehensive. But the Allies could hardly see the French army through its commander's eyes, they were in great straits for forage and supplies[2] and were hard put to obtain subsistence while restoring the ruined fortifications of Bouchain. Moreover, there was much sickness among them due to the recent heavy rains, and the Duke himself was far from well. But if the ministry at home would have furnished the necessary funds and supplies, Marlborough would not have stopped short at taking Bouchain. Le Quesnoy and Landrecies were within his reach and the capture of these two places would have brought the Allies on to the Oise. Barely had Bouchain been invested before the Duke was making plans for besieging Le Quesnoy and he dispatched Stair, one of his most trusted subordinates, on a special mission to induce the Treasurer to make the necessary provision for the siege. Oxford was plausible but evasive and procrastinated till, as Stair says,[3] "Mr. Prior had sent them back from France what they took to be a *carte blanche* for settling all the differences in Europe and in the end I was allowed to go back with a bamboozling letter to the Duke." Moreover difficulties were raised at The Hague by the Dutch authorities who, being more accurately informed about

[1] *Mem.*, lxx., 360.
[2] Disp., v., 523, *cf* Portland MSS., v., 92.
[3] Marchmont Papers, iii, 75; *cf*. Stair, *Annals*, i., 248.

the negotiations than was Marlborough, were not disposed with peace so near to spend money on a project, unlikely, even if successful, to produce any effect. Accordingly the siege of Le Quesnoy was left over for the next campaign, and in the middle of October the Allies followed the example the French had already set them by dispersing to their winter-quarters. They had accomplished less than they might have hoped to do had Eugene and his army been available during the campaign but a real advance had been made, Villars's great lines were pierced and only two minor fortresses stood between the Allies and the road down the Oise to Paris.

CHAPTER XX

THE PEACE OF UTRECHT

NEGOTIATIONS RESUMED—MARLBOROUGH AND HARLEY—CHARGES AGAINST THE DUKE—MARLBOROUGH IN OPPOSITION—DISMISSAL—THE UTRECHT CONGRESS—ORMONDE'S "RESTRAINING ORDERS"—THE BRITISH WITHDRAW—PEACE CONCLUDED

WHILE Marlborough had been successfully negotiating the *non plus ultra* lines, in England important steps had been taken. Harley and his more brilliant colleague, if already tending to disagree over other matters, were as yet in accord as to the policy to be pursued towards France. Harley had shown himself ready to resume negotiations by sanctioning Jersey's despatch of Gaultier to Paris in January, 1711, but would not as yet make definite overtures for peace, lest he should appear to be deserting the Grand Alliance. But his fidelity to his country's obligations was more of the letter than of the spirit. When Louis showed himself averse to resuming negotiations with the Dutch Harley did not take the straightforward course of declining to enter into discussions from which his allies were excluded. He continued secret negotiations through Gaultier which resulted in April in definite proposals from France. These promised securities for English trade in Spain, in the Mediterranean, and in the Indies, a satisfactory "barrier" for the Dutch together with trade concessions, and in general terms satisfaction for the other Allies. As to Spain itself these proposals were studiously vague. Already the mere prospect that one of the Allies

might leave the others in the lurch had changed the tone of France from the humiliating submissiveness of Gertruydenberg.

These terms were at once communicated to Lord Raby, the British representative at The Hague, with instructions to acquaint the Dutch ministers with their tenour, but not to reveal them to Marlborough. Heinsius and his colleagues expressed themselves as in principle desirous of peace but without more explicit proposals they would not commit themselves. That they would have liked to conduct the negotiations themselves seems clear from the offers which Heinsius now commissioned Petkum, the "peace broker" St. John aptly called him, to make to Louis. But Louis knew well that if he could detach England from the coalition the rest would be plain sailing and it was with England and through the agency of Gaultier and the diplomat poet Prior that the negotiations were continued

Thus while Marlborough was confronting Villars and trying to find or make a way across the inundations of the Scarpe and Sensée, Prior was at work in Paris and at Fontainebleau. While laying down as an essential preliminary that no peace should be made "but what should be to the satisfaction of our Allies" Prior's instructions were mainly concerned with forwarding the particular interests of Great Britain. The terms Harley and St. John were asking were sufficiently stiff to make Torcy declare that Great Britain "asked no less than to be master of the Mediterranean and Spain, to possess . . . the Indies, and to take away from France all that appertains to that Crown in America,"[1] but nevertheless

[1] Portland MSS., v., 35.

the French did not break off the negotiations. Early in August, just as Marlborough was demonstrating his ability to accomplish great deeds even when deprived of Eugene's assistance, Prior was back in London and with him came Mesnager, one of the French representatives at Gertruydenberg, now fully empowered to sign preliminary articles.

Mesnager found the English ministers, for all their disposition to peace, disinclined to give way on certain points for which he had orders to press. However, by relegating details to the final treaty, it proved possible to arrive at three conventions which might serve as preliminaries of peace. The first of these related to the concessions to be made to England, the second to the terms affecting the Emperor and the Dutch, the last dealt with those to be offered to the Duke of Savoy. Thus three weeks after the fall of Bouchain had effectually demonstrated the extreme unlikeliness of a successful resistance to an Allied advance in force in the next campaign, Harley and St. John threw over the principle of preserving the Spanish monarchy from falling into Bourbon hands and practically pledged England, in violation of her express obligations to her Allies, to the terms subsequently arranged in detail at Utrecht. But once they had departed from the pledge given by the partners in the Grand Alliance not to enter into separate negotiations, these further steps followed inevitably.

The United Provinces not unnaturally protested against the whole transaction which Lord Strafford[1] now communicated to them, but to their protests St. John merely

[1] Raby had received this earldom in June, 1711.

answered that as England had borne far more than her agreed share of the burden of the war she was entitled to the principal share in settling the peace. The United Provinces were, moreover, too anxious for peace to stand out and consented to the meeting of the peace conference at Utrecht in January. The Imperial Minister at St. James's, Count Gallas, went so far in his protests, communicating to the newspapers the terms announced to him in private, using the strongest language about the Queen and her ministers and promoting by all possible means the opposition both in Parliament and the country to the peace, that in October the Queen took the extreme step of forbidding him the Court and asking the Emperor to replace him.

Opposition had not been slow to manifest itself. The Whigs were up in arms and their enemies had certainly given them openings. A vigorous warfare of lampoons and pamphlets was waged. Swift, enlisted in Harley's service, led the attacks on the war-party in the *Examiner*. Marlborough, though on first returning home inclined to a neutral attitude, could not stand aside and was soon committed to a prominent part in the opposition.

Marlborough's original inclination to avoid taking public part against the ministry may be partly traced to the struggle already developing within it. Associated by necessity rather than by cordiality or by confidence Harley and St. John were bound sooner or later to fall out. St. John, the more unscrupulous, more brilliant, more ambitious, had no sympathy with the tendency to compromise to which Harley clung. Harley whose ideal was the formation of a centre party of

moderate men, who had been intriguing with Somers and Halifax at the very moment that the wave of High Church and Tory reaction bore him into power, was jealous of St. John, reluctant to commit himself to the extreme Tory and High Church programme, equally reluctant to provoke a breach with Marlborough, and though his elevation to the peerage as Earl of Oxford and Earl of Mortimer, coupled with his appointment as Lord High Treasurer (May 29th/June 9th), marked the high tide of his success, the knowledge of St. John's rivalry disposed him to friendly relations with Marlborough. On his part the Duke had not been unwilling to keep in with the chief minister. Godolphin, rather than Marlborough, had been mainly responsible for Harley's dismissal in 1708 and as the Duke said[1] without Oxford's confidence he could not possibly "carry on the service with any advantage to the public or satisfaction to myself." Stair wrote in July, 1711, to Lord Mar:

> The Duke has no allies to comprehend, nothing to ask for himself nor any of his friends to make him burdensome, he only desires by My Lord Treasurer's friendship to be in a condition to serve the Queen and his country. He tells me he will be with Lord Treasurer as he was with Lord Godolphin. I have reason to think this is his sentiment and I am persuaded I do him but justice to believe he is above being governed by the little piques which may be in his family in things which so highly concern the Queen's service and the welfare of the country.[2]

But a combination between Marlborough and Oxford would not have suited St. John. It would have greatly

[1] Bath MSS., p. 205.

[2] Portland MSS., v, 43.

diminished his own influence and a combination of moderate men, which many people welcomed as a chance of averting party strife, would not have benefited one whom accident rather than convictions had made the leader of the more extreme Tories. And while St. John saw in a successful attack on Marlborough a means of furthering his own ends and making his support indispensable to Oxford, the Duke had been annoyed by the concealment from him of the negotiations, was genuinely opposed to a separate treaty in defiance of all our obligations, and naturally anxious not to see the fruits of his victories thrown away. As has been stated, during the campaign of 1711 the Duke's correspondence both with St. John and with Oxford had been cordial enough, but Oxford's letter of September 5th/16th professing to give "a sum of what is hitherto done" in "the affair of peace" can hardly be described as even literally accurate. Marlborough when he declared himself anxious to do everything in his power to promote peace was not thinking of a separate peace. Shortly after the fall of Bouchain the Duke had written to protest against the position in which he would find himself should he "pass by The Hague, with our plenipotentiaries there and myself a stranger to their transactions." "What hopes," he continued, "can I have of any countenance at home if I am not thought fit to be trusted abroad."[1] About the same time he had also written to Oxford to complain of the scurrilous accusations which the Tory press was spreading against him and to declare that the libellous attacks which the Duchess' secretary, Maynwaring, and other Whig writers were making upon

[1] Coxe, iii., 255.

the ministry were without his knowledge or approval. That the Duchess was largely responsible for them seems probable, but until the moment of his return from the Continent the Duke had maintained friendly relations with the ministers. It is possible, as already suggested, that he was anxious to avoid a breach lest the warrants for continuing the building of Blenheim should be refused. He took the greatest pleasure and interest in Blenheim and was set on seeing it completed, but the interests of Blenheim were not strong enough to cause him to adopt the line of complete acquiescence in the ministerial policy which alone could have kept him in office. Moreover, not till he arrived in London could he discover what that policy really was and how far ministers had already proceeded. Oxford and St. John might in their letters maintain a show of candour and friendliness: face to face with them Marlborough could not fail to penetrate their real sentiments.

On reaching The Hague at the beginning of November Marlborough had a first intimation of what he had to expect. Early in the session of 1711 a commission had been appointed "for the taking, examining, and stating the publick accounts of the kingdom" and the composition of this commission, Tories and Jacobites almost without exception, had been a clue to its real object. In April they had presented a preliminary report that the greater part of the £35,000,000 odd granted by Parliament up to October, 1710, had not yet been accounted for. This report had been most effectively criticized by Walpole in a couple of pamphlets, and the accusations of peculation and malversation were shown to be baseless; nothing daunted, the com-

missioners returned to the charge and reported to the Commons that between 1702 and 1711 over £63,000 had been privately paid to the Duke by the contractors for the supply of bread and bread-waggons to the forces in the Netherlands. Intelligence of this reached the Duke at The Hague, and he lost no time in writing to inform the commissioners that this payment was "no more than has been allowed as a perquisite to the General, or Commander-in-Chief, of the army in the Low Countries, even before the Revolution." "I do assure you," he continued, "that whatever sums I have received on that account have been constantly employed for the service of the public, in keeping secret correspondence and getting intelligence of the enemy's motions and designs."[1] A second item, which the commissioners had not as yet raised but subsequently made a charge against him, was that of having appropriated a sum of 2½ per cent. on the pay of the foreign auxiliaries in the British service, the total so deducted having amounted to £280,000. To this Marlborough had so clear a reply that he proceeded there and then to draw the commissioners' attention to it and to point out that the deduction had been agreed upon by William III. and the sovereigns from whom the auxiliaries were hired to form a secret service fund, and that under a royal warrant dated July 6, 1702, the Queen had authorized him to receive and employ this money.[2] According to Parker, indeed, the Duke's intelligence, which was notoriously excellent, cost him all this sum and more besides.

[1] Coxe, iii., 262

[2] *Cf.* Blenheim MSS., 8th Report of Historical MSS. Commission, App. i., p. 16.

It was hardly surprising therefore that soon after Marlborough landed he entered into negotiations with the Whig leaders. If the Whigs could make but a poor show in the Commons in the Upper House the situation was different. There they were very nearly in a majority and with the support of Marlborough and of another and quite unexpected ally they could count on defeating ministers. This new ally was Nottingham, hitherto an unswerving supporter of the Tory party. But Nottingham was no friend to Oxford and had not been conciliated by a place in the new administration. Moreover, if a strong Tory, he was, like many of his party, a convinced supporter of the Protestant succession and looked with suspicion on the influence which Jersey and other Jacobites had been shown to possess. To secure Nottingham the Whigs went to the length of supporting his favourite measure, the Occasional Conformity Bill. This sacrificed their principles and left in the lurch their Dissenting supporters, whose interests they endeavoured to protect by a "without prejudice" clause. Marlborough may at least escape the accusation to which his Whig allies exposed themselves in their endeavour to avoid the discredit of deserting our Allies and being false to our treaty obligations.

Nottingham's help gave the Whigs the votes they needed. When the Queen opened Parliament (December 6th/17th), she announced that "notwithstanding the arts of those who delight in war," an obvious allusion to the Duke, "both time and place are appointed for opening the treaty of a general peace." When she went on that "our allies (especially the States General), whose interest I look upon as inseparable from my own,

have, by their ready concurrence, expressed their entire confidence in me," she was departing widely from the paths of strict veracity and Nottingham, in denouncing the preliminaries as a breach of our treaty engagements, could make out a strong case. He concluded by moving as an amendment to the address a clause that "no peace could be safe or honourable to Great Britain or Europe if Spain and the Indies were allotted to any branch of the house of Bourbon." Supported by Marlborough and by the leading Whigs, including Bishop Burnet himself, the clause was not very successfully attacked from the ministerial benches and was carried against the Government by sixty-two votes to fifty-four. It was during this debate that a remark from Lord Anglesey that the country might have enjoyed the blessings of peace soon after Ramillies but for certain influential individuals interested in prolonging the war led to Marlborough's taking the opportunity to repudiate with warmth this and similar insinuations, asserting that his "great age" and "numerous fatigues in war" made him "ardently wish for the power to enjoy a quiet repose." This assertion bore the stamp of sincerity and is borne out not only by repeated expressions in his private and confidential correspondence but by the facts. When he forced the *non plus ultra* lines Marlborough was fifteen years older than were Wellington and Napoleon when they faced each other at Waterloo, twenty-three years older than Gustavus when he fell at Lutzen, ten years the senior of his own colleague Eugene, twenty years older than Berwick, and his years were telling upon him. In narrating his campaigns constant references have been made to Marl-

borough's ill health, and in 1711 this had been unusually troublesome; the "dizziness in the head" from which he was suffering in May, the collapse and exhaustion which had driven him to his bed after the passage of the lines and the "drought" of which he had complained to St. John in November were all indications of failing health. Ambitious of military glory as he had once been, Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet with the forcing of so many formidable lines and the capture of so many formidable fortresses were enough to have contented the greediest soul alive, and even if he retained the command for another year he could hardly hope, in face of the unmistakable dispositions of ministers, to be allowed to add appreciably to his laurels. If Marlborough gave his vote for Nottingham's amendment it is not to his desire for further personal military glory that it is reasonable to attribute it.

The defeat of the Government in the Lords was somewhat mitigated by the rejection by the Commons of a clause couched in the same terms by a majority of 126 in a house of under 350, but for the moment the government had received a serious check. Indeed at one time it was believed that the Queen was wavering, that she was contemplating a change of front, and that Somers was about to form a new administration. But Oxford was equal to the occasion; the Queen was easily persuaded by him that the existing ministry was the only alternative to the return to office of the detested Whigs who would force upon her the re-admission to her household of the Duchess of Marlborough and would require her to make concessions to Dissent. Reassured of the Queen's support and provided with a sufficient

majority in the Lords by the creation of twelve new Tory peers, the ministry carried the war into the hostile camp by taking steps against Marlborough whom they not unreasonably regarded as one of the chief authors of their reverse and a principal obstacle to the progress of their policy. On December 21st/January 1st the Commissioners of Public Accounts presented their report to the Commons and ten days later the Queen appeared at the Council and declared that in view of the information laid against the Duke by the Commissioners she "thought fit to dismiss him from all his employments that the matter might have an impartial examination." That nothing might be wanting to humiliate the Duke the Queen's autograph letter announcing his dismissal was couched in terms "so very offensive that the Duke flung it in the fire, though he was not a man of passion."[1] But that he speedily recovered his normal self-control is clear from the dignified letter in which he acknowledged the Queen's communication.

Madam, I am very sensible of the honour your Majesty does me in dismissing me from your service by a letter of your own hand, though I find by it that my enemies have been able to prevail with your Majesty to do it in the manner that is most injurious to me. And if their malice and inveteracy against me had not been more powerful with them than the consideration of your Majesty's honour and justice they would not have influenced you to impute the occasion of my dismission to a false and malicious insinuation, contrived by themselves and made public, when there was no opportunity for me to give in my answer, which they must needs be conscious would fully detect the falsehood

[1] Blenheim MSS., p. 16.

and malice of their aspersions and would not leave them that handle for bringing your Majesty to such extremities against me. But I am much more concerned at an expression in your Majesty's letter, which seems to complain of the treatment you had met with. I know not how to understand the word, nor what construction to make of it. I know I have always endeavoured to serve your Majesty faithfully and zealously through a great many undeserved mortifications. But if your Majesty does intend by that expression to find fault with my not coming to the Cabinet Council, I am very free to acknowledge that my duty to your Majesty and country would not give me leave to join in the counsel of a man who, in my opinion, puts your Majesty upon all manner of extremities. And it is not my opinion only, but the opinion of all mankind, that the friendship of France must needs be destructive to your Majesty, there being in that Court a root of enmity irreconciliable to your Majesty's government and the religion of these kingdoms. I wish your Majesty may never feel the want of so faithful a servant as I have always endeavoured to approve myself to you.

The news of Marlborough's fall was hailed at Versailles as conclusive proof not only of the peaceful intentions of the Tories but of their capacity to make good their proposals. Far different was the reception of the news by Eugene, who arrived in London only two days after the Duke's dismissal upon a special mission from the new Emperor, for Charles had been duly elected in his brother's place in the course of October. Eugene's errand, undertaken originally at Marlborough's suggestion, was to arrange new conditions for the conduct of the war: he was empowered, if only England would remain true to the Alliance, to promise the doubling of

the Imperial contingents in Flanders and in Spain and a handsome contribution to the expense of the war in the latter country. He was dismayed to find his colleague out of employment. He did not repeat the mistake of Gallas by showing himself openly hostile to the Tories, but he could not conceal his views and took every opportunity of showing his esteem for Marlborough. It was during this stay in London that occurred an incident recorded by Burnet; reference having been made in his presence to a pamphlet which had said Marlborough was "perhaps once fortunate," Eugene replied: "It is the greatest commendation that can be given, for he was always successful and this must imply that if in one single instance he was fortunate all his other successes were owing to his conduct."

Eugene's presence in London and his attitude towards Marlborough were so awkward to the ministers that they actually employed the expedient of spreading abroad through the agency of a Jesuit called Plunket the ridiculous story that Marlborough, Godolphin and Eugene were plotting the assassination of the Treasurer and St. John and the seizure of the Tower. These baseless allegations were too absurd to gain much credence even in the excited state of party feeling, but they suffice to show how Marlborough was still feared by the Tories. A further proof of Tory hostility was afforded when the Commons proceeded on January 15th/26th to discuss the report of the Commissioners of Public Accounts. The debate showed that the majority of the House was swayed rather by political considerations than by the evidence. On the facts, as disclosed by Marlborough's own statement to the Commissioners

and corroborated at the Bar of the House by Sir John Germaine, formerly aide-de-camp to the Prince of Waldeck, the percentage on the bread contract was a customary perquisite of the Allied Commander-in-Chief and if, as the Commissioners pointed out, they could not find that any other English general had ever received it the reason was the more to Marlborough's credit, England had never before produced a general to whom her allies would entrust the command of their armies. Yet the Commons, although Hedges and other moderate Tories joined the Whigs in defending the Duke, voted by 265 to 155 that these payments had been unwarrantable and illegal. On the second charge, as to the percentage deducted from the pay of the foreign troops, it was resolved that the money was public money and ought to be accounted for. This in face of the Queen's warrant permitting the practice, which Hedges admitted that he had countersigned as Secretary of State, hardly showed the House of Commons in the light of a judicial body. But it is noticeable that though the Queen, when these resolutions of the Commons were laid before her, issued orders to the Attorney-General to institute a prosecution the matter was not pressed. St. John, who had been prominent in the attack on Marlborough, was too skilful a political tactician to risk an impeachment. The fact is conclusive testimony to his knowledge of the weakness of his case and may perhaps be taken as disposing sufficiently of the charges without detailed examination of the vindication which the Duke had drawn up and published. It may be added that when some of the foreign princes, treating the Commons' resolution as an infringement of

their rights, proceeded to offer the contribution to the new Commander-in-Chief, Ormonde, that model of propriety had no scruples about accepting it,[1] nor did his friends and employers raise the least objection.

Whig opposition notwithstanding on January 18th/29th, 1712, negotiations were definitely begun at Utrecht. The British representatives, Lord Strafford and Robinson, Bishop of Bristol and Lord Keeper, went into them heavily handicapped. The separate preliminaries already concluded with Mesnager had cost them the confidence of their allies and destroyed the best chance of concluding a general and satisfactory peace. Each member of the Grand Alliance was now working purely in his own interest, sincere co-operation was at an end, and the rising demands of France showed clearly how fatal to a satisfactory general settlement the Tories' premature and precipitate action had been. Even from the purely selfish English point of view, by keeping the Alliance together and not playing into Louis's hands by displaying readiness, and almost eagerness, to make separate terms, better terms might and should have been obtained. The reservation by France of fishing rights over Newfoundland, the existence of the "French shore" which was to handicap the development of the colony so severely and to cause constant friction between England and France in days to come, followed directly and logically upon Harley's desertion of his country's allies.

The negotiations were long and intricate. The question of the guarantees against the possible union of France and Spain under one crown gained additional

[1] Parker (p. 199) declares Ormonde applied for these payments.

importance from the succession of calamities which had befallen the French Royal Family, sweeping away the Dauphin Louis (April 1711), his son and successor, better known as the Duke of Burgundy (February, 1712) and the latter's eldest son, the five-year old Duke of Brittany (March, 1712), and leaving only a sickly infant of two years old, afterwards Louis XV., between Philip and the French throne. But Philip was most reluctant to renounce his claim to France and in consequence the negotiations could make no progress. Not even Oxford and St. John were prepared to conclude a peace without guarantees against the union of France and Spain,[1] and in April the sittings of the Congress were suspended, not to be resumed for ten months. Separate negotiations between England and France were, however, continued, the first result of which was the dispatch (April 29th/May 10th) of the famous secret "restraining orders" to Ormonde.[2] These orders, discreditable in the extreme to the Government which issued them, forbade the new British Commander-in-Chief from "hazarding a battle" until further orders and directed him to enter into private correspondence with Villars. Ormonde, however, was unable to carry these orders out completely. He refused to join Eugene in an attack on the hostile camp (May 17th/28th) but had to agree to cover the siege of Le Quesnoy a measure to which the ministers could not refuse their approval. The siege was accordingly begun (May 28th/June 8th) with Ormonde's troops in position between Solesmes and Le Cateau. Eugene's scheme was to utilize the advantage

[1] *Cf.* Bolingbroke Correspondence, iii., 448–456.

[2] Received May 13th/24th; *cf.* Eliot Hodgkin MSS., p. 203.

gained in Marlborough's last campaign; the position then secured on the flank of the French and on their side of the famous lines was to be improved by reducing Le Quesnoy, and Landrecies "both of which places," wrote. Ormonde,[1] "are inconsiderable and would be taken in a short time, which gives us sure entry into France without passing the Somme and brings us upon the Oise."

The debate in the Lords which followed the disclosure of Ormonde's orders afforded Marlborough an opportunity for effective criticism: "I am at a loss," he is reported to have said, "how to reconcile to the rules of war the orders not to hazard a battle but to engage in a siege, since it is impossible to make a siege without either hazarding a battle in case the enemy attempts to relieve the place, or else shamefully raising the siege." At the same time he urged on ministers the importance of prosecuting the war with vigour, even though negotiations were in progress, pointing out that "it has often occurred that a victory or a siege has produced good effects and manifold advantages when treaties were still farther advanced than is the present negotiation." But far from prosecuting the war with renewed vigour the ministers were on the verge of a very different step. Louis had succeeded in overcoming his grandson's objections to renouncing his claims on France and coupled this with an offer to hand Dunkirk over to a British garrison as a pledge of good faith. On this the Queen visited the Lords (May 26th/June 6th) and announced to the House the terms of the proposed treaty together with the offers which France was prepared to

[1] Portland MSS., v., 177.

make to the Emperor and the other allies. The announcement was followed by a sharp debate in which Marlborough, Godolphin, and Nottingham denounced the action of the Government unsparingly. "The measures," Marlborough declared, "pursued in England for a year past are directly contrary to her Majesty's engagements with the Allies, have sullied the triumphs and glories of her reign and will render the English name odious to all other nations." His words were to be only too well confirmed before many weeks had elapsed.

Ministers meanwhile proceeded on their chosen course. An armistice for two months was concluded with France and orders were dispatched to Ormonde to separate his troops from Eugene's and withdraw to Dunkirk. When these orders reached him Le Quesnoy had fallen (June 23rd/July 4th) and the Allies were about to lay siege to Landrecies, Ormonde's corps being as before detailed for the covering force. The feelings with which these orders were received in the British army have been well described by the soldier-diarists to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of Marlborough's wars. Parker writes how the troops murmured at having only a view of France "which they reckoned they had dearly earned the plunder of"; Millner speaks of the "great muttering" which the announcement provoked and describes how not only Eugene's Germans and Dutch but the bulk of the German auxiliaries in British pay quitted the Allied camp (July 5th/16th) and "left our corps quite alone at Cambresis to shift for ourselves." "And as they marched off that day," he writes, "both sides looked very dejectedly on each other, neither being admitted

to speak to each other, to prevent reflections that might thereby arise, being there was then made a strange revolution between us and our allies by our cessation of arms or entrance of an odd peace with France apart."

It is perhaps the most painful episode in the annals of the British Army. Oxford and St. John had a good enough case for their resolve to end the war but their tortuous and almost treacherous procedure has involved them in deserved discredit, and it is hard to pardon the humiliations to which they exposed the men whom Marlborough had led to so many triumphs. To have their orders flouted by hireling Hessians, to be told by German mercenaries: "We do not serve for pay, but for fame," to have Saxons and Hanoverians scornfully withdrawing from their camp and casting in their lot, regardless of loss of pay, with the Imperialists whom the British were deserting, to have the Dutch commandments of Bouchain and Tournai shutting their gates in the face of the men to whom the fall of those fortresses was largely due, may have meant little to politicians like Oxford and his colleague but was a bitter experience for British soldiers. Small wonder that when, on reaching the end of their first day's march for Dunkirk, Ormonde had the suspension of hostilities announced the news was received not with cheers and acclamations but with hisses and murmurs, with exclamations and curses, that officers and men could hardly look each other in the face for shame and that many deserted to take service under the Allies.

The withdrawal of the British from the Allied army was soon followed by the elevation to the peerage of the principal author of this measure, and on July 27th/

August 7th St. John, now Viscount Bolingbroke, left for Paris to facilitate the removal of the points at issue between England and France. Meanwhile despite Ormonde's withdrawal Eugene had persisted in forming the siege of Landrecies, "the rashest act that great man had ever been guilty of," wrote Parker, and the criticism was justified. Villars, now in numerical superiority, deceived Eugene by a feint against the Allied main body on the Ecaillon and hurling a strong column against the inadequately guarded bridge at Denain defeated the Dutch completely. Eugene had to raise the siege of Landrecies forthwith and to fall right back to Tournai. Before the campaign of 1712 closed not only Le Quesnoy but Bouchain and Douai also had passed back into French hands, Eugene having to stand by as inactive and impotent as Villars during the siege of Mons or in the campaign of 1710. His inability to hold Villars may be some indication of what the British commander and the British contingent, for all its numerical weakness, had meant to the Allies.

The French successes in the field were fully reflected in the relatively favourable terms which Louis was able to secure when at last the formal conferences, resumed in February, 1713, resulted in the batch of treaties collectively known as the Peace of Utrecht. The first of these, that between England and France (March 31/April 11, 1713), secured from Louis his solemn assent to Philip's renunciation of his claims on France, a recognition of the Hanoverian succession, and a promise that he would not obtain for his subjects special privileges as regards trade and navigation in Spanish dominions. Further, Dunkirk, a thorn in the side of English trade

and a menace to our communications with the Netherlands, was to have its fortifications demolished and its harbour filled in, while in America and the West Indies England secured acquisitions which mark a very definite stage in the expansion of our overseas possessions. The recognition of our rights to the Hudson's Bay settlements, the cession of Acadia and Newfoundland, even if accompanied in the latter instance by troublesome reservations, the surrender of the West Indian island of St. Kitt's, hitherto in joint occupation of England and France, were substantial gains. The parallel treaty between England and Spain, though not concluded for another three months (July 2nd/13th, 1713), formed the complement of the Anglo-French treaty. By this the King of Spain confirmed his renunciation, acknowledged the Hanoverian succession, granted to England trade concessions of the greatest value in the hitherto closely-guarded preserve of the Spanish Indies, and acquiesced in the retention by England of Gibraltar and Minorca, acquisitions which by providing England with naval bases of her own in the Mediterranean were the most valuable of all her gains. What William III. had seen to be urgently wanted, what Marlborough in his turn had sought to win at the outset of the war, England now secured. That these extensive gains were in the main due to the general who had led the armies of England and her allies to an unexampled series of victories cannot be denied even by those who approve the policy, the methods are beyond justification, of Oxford and Bolingbroke. If England emerged from the War of the Spanish Succession "the sea-power instead of one of the sea-powers," as Admiral Mahan puts it, with

greatly increased possessions overseas, with valuable commercial advantages, guaranteed—as far as paper promises could guarantee—against that union between France and Spain and that interference by foreign powers in her domestic concerns which she had gone into the war to prevent; if her standing amongst the powers of Europe in 1713 was far higher than when Marlborough had crossed to the Netherlands in 1702, this was as indisputably John Churchill's work as the reputation for faithlessness to pledges, for disregard of the interests of allies and of those whom, like the Catalans, she had promised to protect, must be laid to the door of Robert Harley and of Henry St. John.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

MARLBOROUGH GOES ABROAD—CORRESPONDENCE WITH JACOBITES—RETURN HOME—POSITION UNDER GEORGE I.—ILLNESS AND DEATH—MARLBOROUGH AS A LEADER—AS A STRATEGIST—HIS PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES—MARLBOROUGH AS AN ADMINISTRATOR—AS A TACTICIAN—HIS PLACE AMONG SOLDIERS.

SOME months before the conclusion of peace Marlborough had quitted England for the Continent. Unable to prevent the progress of a policy he disliked, exposed to press attacks which increased in vigour and scurrility as the consciousness of success emboldened Tory scribes to assail and misrepresent every action of his public and private life, the Duke had no inducements to remain in England. He was for a time detained by the illness of Godolphin, who had been taken ill while staying with the Duke at St. Albans. But after his old colleague's death (September, 1712), Marlborough decided to put into execution his resolution to seek asylum abroad. He was the more disposed to do so because a suit had been brought against him in the Court of Queen's Bench for the recovery of fifteen thousand pounds a year derived from the 2½% on the pay of the foreign troops. Further, though the Duke had no legal liability for any expenses connected with the erection of the mansion that was to embody the national gratitude, the contractors and the workmen employed on building Blenheim were suing him for the

arrears due to them through the remissness of the Treasury in making payments. Oxford was too politic to press his fallen enemy too hard. Indications had not been wanting that vindictiveness, if carried too far, would defeat its object: already at the time of the debates on the reports of the Public Accounts Commission signs had been apparent of a revulsion in public feeling in favour of the Duke, and the chief minister was perhaps somewhat relieved to facilitate Marlborough's departure. The Queen too, was only too ready to see the Duke out of the country and accordingly in November, 1712, Marlborough, accompanied by a small retinue but not by any of his family, left Dover for Ostend.

The Duke's reception on the Continent, wherever he went, was of the friendliest and most honourable. At Ostend he was welcomed by salutes of artillery, met and entertained by the Governor, cheered by crowds, and treated with every mark of honour and respect. From Ostend he proceeded by Maastricht to Aix-la-Chapelle, meeting the same gratifying reception everywhere. At Aix-la-Chapelle, where he spent some little time, he was visited by all manner of persons anxious to pay their respects, a tribute which was a spontaneous tribute to the work Marlborough had accomplished. Neither in the Netherlands nor in Germany had any of those who thronged to welcome and salute him anything to gain from one whose presence among them was itself a proof of his loss of power. Marlborough's sojourn on the Continent lasted nearly two years. Early in 1713 he was joined by the Duchess and proceeded to Frankfurt am Main where he remained until the progress of

hostilities on the Upper Rhine rendered his departure advisable. He left Frankfurt therefore in August, 1713, for Antwerp, where he remained until Queen Anne's death and George I.'s accession ended the Tory ascendency and permitted his return home. An incident of his stay at Frankfurt was his visit in May to the Suabian principality of Mindelheim, the reward for Blenheim conferred upon him by the Emperor. But this principality had formed part of the dominions taken from the Elector of Bavaria and the Treaty of Rastatt (March, 1714) pledged the Emperor to restore to the Elector the possessions of which he had been deprived; the final pacification therefore cost the Duke Mindelheim and its revenue of two thousand pounds a year. Such a loss was a serious matter and the Duke endeavoured with Eugene's assistance to obtain from the Emperor an indemnity. Charles VI. was lavish in promises of an equivalent but, what with the more than normally embarrassed state of the Austrian finances and the habitual procrastination of the Court of Vienna, no tangible compensation, either in money or lands, ever reached Marlborough.

Marlborough's main occupation during this period was in watching events in England. The rout of the Whigs and the final conclusion of the peace treaties had left Oxford and Bolingbroke without the common hostility which had united them. Their quarrels and intrigues were eagerly followed by the exile and few people were more keenly interested in the reports as to the Queen's health, her Majesty's attitude towards her brother, and the intrigues between the contending factions in the ministry. But Marlborough was some-

thing more than a mere spectator in these transactions. He was in constant correspondence with his friends at home and with the Court of Hanover, serving to some extent as a link between them. He acted to a certain extent independently of the Whigs and did not sign the agreement of the leaders of that party, though Sir Richard Onslow was specially sent over to obtain his signature, his motive apparently being to co-operate rather with the more moderate Tories, with whom his political and religious views were after all more in accord. That in October, 1713, he actually offered the Elector a loan of twenty thousand pounds seems well established,[1] as also that the Electress Sophia was disposed to put her confidence in the Duke, as she personally was more inclined to the moderate Tories than to the Whigs. But at the same time it cannot be denied that Marlborough during this very period was corresponding with the Jacobites, notably with his nephew Berwick.

Archdeacon Coxe's indignant protests against the reviving of "the old slander . . . of his treasonable correspondence" with the Stuarts cannot, unfortunately for Marlborough's credit, be maintained in face of the documents recently published from the great collection of Stuart Papers at Windsor Castle. But what these documents do show is that Marlborough did nothing whatever to assist the Jacobites. Berwick wrote to James in March, 1714, of a letter just received from the Duke, "little more than *verba et voces* according to that gentleman's usual custom." "One may as well give these people as good as they bring, that is to say words

[1] *Cf* Stuart MSS, iii., 278, 308.

for words, for I see nothing else in all M. Malbranche [Marlborough] says and indeed he has never behaved himself otherwayes." A little later (April, 1714) Berwick was declaring there was "no use to be got out of the Duke but it were as well to keep civil with him."[1] Clearly Marlborough was at the old game of re-insurance, at which he and all the other leading men of the day had played in William's time. He was hedging, endeavouring to secure himself in the event of the restoraton of the old dynasty, no impossible contingency either, for James had only to declare that he found London worth the sacrifice of the Mass for the succession question to be solved immediately. Marlborough's correspondence with the Jacobites at this time stands on a different footing to the infinitely more discreditable episode of 1691–1694, his treachery to William III., inasmuch as his position was now entirely different and that furthermore England and France were now at peace. But even so the incident is not to Marlborough's credit.

Anne's death (July 20/31, 1714), only four days after the accession of Bolingbroke to the chief position, coupled with the promptitude and energy of the leading partisans of the Hanoverian succession, deprived Bolingbroke of the opportunity of showing what line he really intended to take and has left the nature of his intentions to be a subject of surmise and discussion. But though with the Hanoverian dynasty Marlborough came back to England, and at first seemed about to be one of the leading men under the new régime, the Duke was to play a part in the political doings of the next few

[1] Stuart MSS., i., 313.

years hardly commensurate with his past services and importance. The first document to which George I. set his signature as King was his commission (August 6th/17th), as Captain-General of the forces, and subsequently he became Master General of the Ordnance again while two of his sons-in-law, Godolphin and Bridgewater, received important Household posts, but the most prominent of them, Sunderland, instead of receiving one of the chief ministerial posts was relegated to the Viceroyalty of Ireland, which was regarded as little better than banishment. For a time, however, the Duke enjoyed a position of influence; Berwick wrote in January, 1715, that Marlborough was "omnipotent with the Elector,"[1] but in the crisis of 1715, when Marlborough might have been expected to be prominent, it was Stanhope rather than the Duke who was mainly responsible for the effective military measures which subdued the rebellion, though he took a leading part in "discarding" the Army of the Jacobites like Webb, the victor of Wynendael, whom Bolingbroke had placed in all the chief commands.

For this comparative unimportance there are obvious reasons. If he had worked with the Whigs he had never been of the Whigs. The alliance had been one of necessity not of choice, and if it be remembered that Marlborough's predilections were distinctly Tory, that neither he nor Godolphin can be reckoned as really "party men," that his political creed was that of combining moderate men of all parties in a non-party ministry, an ideal already out of touch with the times, it is easy to understand that in a moment of party

[1] Stuart MSS., i., 346.

triumph with the Whigs absolutely in the ascendent there was but little room for Marlborough and the policy he represented. Moreover, he had no political following. He had broken with the Tories and now even moderate Tories could not escape the odium of suspected Jacobitism. Further, the new King was personally less well-disposed to the Duke than his mother had been. George had never forgiven Marlborough for concealing from him the true plan of campaign for 1708,[1] and the King was inclined to visit upon the Duke the disappointments the Elector had suffered when in search of a military reputation. That Oxford had taken care to bring Marlborough's correspondence with the Stuarts before the notice of the Hanoverian Court seems probable,[2] that the King was aware that even in 1715 Marlborough was still in touch with Berwick is less clear, but Bothmar, the Hanoverian minister resident in London, exerted his great influence steadily against the Duke. But lastly the Duke's health was far from good. It had troubled him for some time past and he had been much afflicted by the death in March, 1714, of his third daughter, Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater, at the early age of twenty-two. Marlborough was deeply attached to his children although their frequent quarrels with their mother were a constant source of distress to him; the relations between the father and his daughters were singularly affectionate and happy and the loss of Lady Bridgewater was a heavy blow. It is not necessary therefore to ascribe Marlborough's inactivity during "the Fifteen" to lukewarmness in the Hanoverian cause, or to believe

[1] *Vide supra*, p 330.

[2] *Cf.* Coxe, iii., 362.

that the ministers entertained suspicions of him; he was already sixty-five and quite unfit to take the field.

But whatever the reasons for the unexpectedly minor part played by the Duke in the two years following George I.'s accession, from the middle of 1716 increasing ill-health fully accounted for his declining importance. In April a Jacobite correspondent wrote that Marlborough was reported "to droop steadily and seems to be falling into the grave."[1] That month he suffered a severer domestic loss even than that of Lady Bridgewater. Anne, Countess of Sunderland, distinguished as the only one of their daughters capable of keeping on good terms with her mother, had been specially beloved by both parents. Her death in her twenty-ninth year was a bitter blow to the Duke and undoubtedly hastened the paralytic seizure which attacked him in the following month. It was May 17th/28th that he was first taken ill. Thereafter there are frequent rumours of his death in all the contemporary newsletters and correspondence. The Stuart MSS. constantly refer to his health: now it is that he "has had a new illness this week and nobody expects recovery" (June, 1716), now that his illness "has degenerated into paralysis of half his body which makes him incapable of business." In October, 1716, he is "not only worse again but is indeed past all recovery, all his senses being almost gone, so that he is but a poor spectacle and had better be dead." Later again he "is alive and better," while in November he "is so much recovered that he is expected very soon to be in town,"[2] and it is

[1] Stuart MSS., iii., 91.

[2] Polwarth MSS., i., 136.

thought that "it will go hard with Oxford," whose impeachment was then in progress, since Marlborough "prevails" (Stuart MSS.). But though the Duke had still several years to live the gossips were busy assigning his offices to different claimants. Actually he retained the Captain Generalship until January, 1721, at the express request of the King, who, having quarrelled with his eldest son after the tradition of the Electoral House of Hanover, preferred that the Duke should retain the office lest he should have to gratify his son with it.[1] But Marlborough was incapable of work and though present in the House of Lords during the impeachment of Oxford he could not do more than vote for condemnation. Indeed, Lord John Somerset records in November, 1717, that when the Duke "saw the House of Lords intent upon discharging Lord Oxford" he "wept like a child" and that "his Duchess and some others were forced to take him out of the house."[2] His speech, which he had lost when first taken ill, returned after a short time, though somewhat impaired, but his health grew steadily worse and though able to take a great deal of pleasure in the continuation of the works at Blenheim[3] he was during the last five years of his life incapable of transacting any public business. It was the Duchess and not her husband who was responsible for the very fortunate speculation in the South Sea

[1] Stuart MSS., iii., 333; *cf.* 395.

[2] Beaufort MSS., p. 97.

[3] Shortly after George I.'s accession Parliament passed an Act for the liquidation of the arrears up to June 1, 1712, at which date work had been stopped by Anne's orders; upon this the Duke determined to complete the building at his own expense, and in the end he contributed a fifth of the total sum of three hundred thousand pounds expended.

Company's shares by which the family netted not less than one hundred thousand pounds shortly before the "Bubble" burst. Finally on June 5th/16th, 1722, death released the Duke from increasing sufferings and infirmities.

It has been aptly said[1] that "modern criticism has passed by the meanness of Godolphin to assail the glory of Marlborough. Yet an application of the same critical standards to both would place Marlborough on a far higher plane." It is not only comparison with Godolphin but comparison with almost any other of his contemporaries that Marlborough can confidently face. The elder Sunderland, a byword even in his own day for lack of conscience and scruple, Harley, the arch-intriguer and master of double-dealing, Bolingbroke, the unscrupulous cynic who shares with Harley the discredit for the manœuvres for peace by which Great Britain's reputation was deservedly damaged, these are not men to surpass whom is a cause for pride. But Shrewsbury was of higher calibre and reputation and so were Danby and Nottingham, and their records in the matter of correspondence with St. Germains do not allow them to cast many stones at Marlborough. It was not an age of high standards of morality, public or private. Charles II. had seen to that effectually. But Marlborough is among the few prominent men of the day whose private life after marriage was above reproach. A faithful but much-tried husband, an affectionate and much-loved parent, his family life presents an attractive

[1] H. W. V. Temperley in the *Cambridge Modern History*, v., p. 461.

picture, whether in his earlier days at St. Albans or in his declining years in his dearly loved great park of Blenheim. Nor was it only in his family circle that he was beloved. The men who followed up the Rhine to Blenheim, who fought for him in campaign after campaign in Flanders, not only trusted him as the Peninsular veterans trusted "the long-nosed devil who licks the French" but loved him as the harder and grimmer Wellington was never loved. The tone in which the few soldier diarists of the time write of their commander is one of real not of conventional affection and respect. Parker, Kane, Deane, even the more matter-of-fact Millner and the morbidly religious Cameronian Blackader, are alike in this. It is not only the commander but the man who appeals to them. Millner writes how "each and every soldier under his Grace's command, being animated by his graceful presence and inviting example, did in like manner, with heroical spirits and undaunted courage, unanimously fully imitate the steps of the same leader." Parker's eulogy[1] is a remarkable testimony.

As to the Duke of Marlborough [he writes], for I cannot forbear giving him the precedence, it was allowed by all men, nay even by France itself, that he was more than a match for all the generals of that nation. This he made appear beyond contradiction in the ten campaigns he made against them; during all which time it cannot be said that he even slipped an opportunity of fighting when there was any probability of his coming at his enemy. And upon all occasions he concerted matters with so much judgement and forecast that he never fought a battle which he did not gain,

nor laid siege to a town which he did not take. It is needless to make a repetition of his great actions, more than this that the last campaign he made, notwithstanding the provocations of his enemies, by their scurrilous pamphlets and malicious invectives in ridiculing his great actions, in hopes thereby to ruffle his temper and raise his passion, so as to put him upon doing some rash action, which might in some measure justify what they alleged against him. And indeed no man but the Duke of Marlborough himself could have borne with the invidious treatment he received. Yet with what temper did he bear all their reproaches and with what calmness and serenity of mind and air of grimace did he carry on that noble scheme he had formed to get within Villars' lines, that we thought invincible, in which he showed the greatest courage and most undaunted resolution. He was peculiarly happy in an invincible calmness of temper and serenity of mind and had a surprizing readiness of thought, even in the heat of battle.

It is this "peculiar excellency" of the Duke's, his self-control and "command of temper," which was in Parker's opinion the point in which his great colleague Eugene failed to reach his level. Parker attributes to the "heat and warmth" of Eugene's temper the "fatal mistake" into which the Prince was led when he "persisted in his resolution to lay siege to Landrecy." Writing from the standpoint of the regimental officer Parker had not that knowledge of the Duke's strategical ideas, of his plans and designs, which the publication, not only of the Duke's own dispatches but of other contemporary evidence of great importance, has divulged to modern times. That Eugene was the Duke's inferior in the fertility, originality, and daring of

his strategy may be supported by not a few examples, of which the Prince's reluctance to leave Lille masked after Oudenarde and to push forward into France (*v.s.* p. 348) is the most obvious and most important. But that Eugene should have failed to grasp the possibilities which the undisputed command of the Channel conferred on the Allies is not surprising A Continental soldier with a purely Continental outlook, he could hardly be expected to approach military problems from an insular standpoint, and Marlborough's thorough appreciation of the opportunities of "amphibious warfare" is more an additional credit to the Duke than its absence is a reproach to Eugene. That Marlborough had this appreciation has been shown not merely by his scheme for following up Oudenarde but by his keenness on the Toulon expedition,[1] his insistence on the acquisition of Minorca,[2] his responsibility for the despatch of the Cadiz expedition in 1702,[3] and the vigour with which he had advocated the operations against Cork and Kinsale in the autumn of 1690.[4] His grasp of what Army and Navy might accomplish by combining their operations is certainly among Marlborough's particular distinctions. It is rightly accounted very much to the credit of William III. that he should have grasped the meaning of sea-power[5] and that he saw how the Mediterranean might prove the Achilles' heel of France: but if William's shortcomings as a commander in the field may be in no small measure redressed and balanced by his merits as a naval strategist, Marlborough stands out in all the more remarkable light of one who accom-

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 311 ff. [2] *V. s.*, p. 369. [3] *V. s.*, p. 173.
[4] *V. s.*, p. 112. [5] Cf. *England in the Mediterranean*, passim.

plished great things on land, both in winning battles and in using them, and at the same time is entitled by the admission of the leading English naval historian of to-day "to rank as high among naval strategists as in his own special art."[1] "To the unsurpassed richness of his military renown," Sir Julian Corbett has written of him, "we must add the greatest achievement that British naval strategy can show."[2] That Marlborough in all the distractions and anxieties of his work as the Allies' commander-in-chief could keep in touch with and direct the naval strategy of England shows as few other things can his really extraordinary capacity. Napoleon may have won greater victories than Blenheim and Ramillies, though it may be asked whether even Napoleon would have accomplished more in Marlborough's place and under the conditions of Marlborough's day, but if Napoleon had ever shown a little of Marlborough's grasp of naval strategy and of the peculiar difficulties of naval operations would his plans for naval attack on England have ended in such complete and humiliating failure?

Marlborough's most outstanding characteristic as a strategist is his capacity to take the great line, which is illustrated not only by his grasp of naval problems and conditions, but also by his power of viewing the war as a whole, of seeing and attending to the needs of Spain and Italy as well as of his own immediate sphere of action; he has, however, other characteristics scarcely less remarkable. The "command of temper," justly eulogized by Parker, stands out clearly in his adaptation of ends

[1] Cf. *England in the Mediterranean*, ii., 204.
[2] *Ibid*, ii., 314

to means. A general's plans, however free his hands, must always be of the nature of a compromise between conflicting claims. Marlborough was for concentration, for being in strength at the decisive point, but he fully realized the necessity of not risking too much, of being secure before he struck, of not missing a lesser success through ill-advised efforts after objects more desirable but less attainable. He came back from the Moselle to the Meuse in 1705 because he realized that as things stood in Holland he must not ask too much from what Marshal Foch has called[1] "la capacité de résistance" of the Dutch, that though success would have greater consequences on the Moselle than anywhere else disaster on the Meuse would neutralize success on the Moselle, that success on the Meuse was preferable to stagnation on the Moselle. It was this same "command of temper" which so often stood him in good stead when his daring projects were rejected or skilful plans spoilt on the brink of success by the folly or ignorance or obstructiveness of Dutch Deputies,[2] by the insubordination of a Slangenberg, the inactivity of a Louis of Baden, the failure of Electors and Margraves to perform their undertakings. The difficulties Marlborough had to face in conciliating easily offended princelings whose heart was not in the cause for which they were hiring out their troops, in persuading the Dutch and the Emperor and the Duke of Savoy to look

[1] *Les Principes de la Guerre*, p. 55.

[2] The Duke of Wellington once said of Marlborough, "he had greater difficulties than I had with his allies. The Dutch were worse to manage than the Spaniards or Portuguese" . . . (*Cf.* Lord Stanhope's *Miscellanies*, pp. 81–86).

a little beyond their own immediate interests, make it remarkable that he accomplished as much as he did in face of an opponent who enjoyed the advantages of a central position, a practically homogeneous army and unity of command.

A free hand Marlborough never enjoyed. He had to contend against considerable handicaps, political and military. He is often criticized for having spent so many successive campaigns in the tedious process of smashing his way through the great barrier of fortresses with which the prudence of Louis XIV. and Louvois and the technical skill of Vauban had invested the naturally weak North-Eastern frontier of France, but this warfare of attrition was largely imposed upon him by his allies and certainly does not represent the strategy he would have adopted if untrammelled. The schemes he carried out in 1704, that he attempted in 1705, that he projected for 1706, give a truer clue to his conceptions of strategy. But, just as from the autumn of 1914 to that of 1918 the French and British armies on the vital Western Front, where alone decisive success could be secured, had to smash their way through a barrier that could not be turned on either flank, so Marlborough was driven to direct attacks on the fortresses of French Flanders and Artois. Moreover, if he was to succeed in striking at France from some quarter where every possible line of approach was not barred by a succession of strong places he must be secure of his communications through Holland with England. The march to the Danube in 1704 had involved little danger to Holland because France then had her chief forces in Southern Germany, but when

Blenheim had compelled France to renounce offensive projects against Vienna she had considerable forces available for a counter-offensive and Villeroi's counter-stroke of 1705 proved an effective reply to Marlborough's attempt to turn the fortress barrier. The Allies had never that numerical superiority which would permit of their making themselves absolutely secure at the points open to a counterstroke and yet would provide a sufficient force for the decisive theatre. "Sûreté," the necessary preliminary in Marshal Foch's doctrine to the successful offensive, tied Marlborough down to the Netherlands. The United Provinces, the necessary link between England and the Empire but politically and militarily the weakest link in the chain, must be protected. This protection was best provided by making the main Allied effort on the Netherlands front rather than by immobilizing in the defence of the Netherlands men essential to the achievement of decisive success elsewhere. Once only after 1705 Marlborough planned to make his main effort elsewhere. Had the fears of colleagues at home and of Allies abroad allowed him to put into execution his daring scheme for the 1706 campaign, he would only have taken with him to Italy a small part of the main Allied army. But another element entered into the reckoning. It was the prospect of co-operation with the British fleet in the Mediterranean which made the Italian project so attractive to Marlborough and on that co-operation he based his hopes of reaching a decision in Provence rather than in Flanders.

But it was not only to soothe Dutch apprehensions that Marlborough made the Netherlands the scene of

his chief efforts. The French also, after Blenheim at any rate, concentrated in that quarter their largest army. This was partly on account of its fertility and resources, but also because they realized the advantages to be reaped from the possession of so many fortified places by the combatant who was deliberately adopting the defensive and aimed rather at avoiding than at seeking battle.[1] If Marlborough's ten campaigns only saw five or six general actions and are largely a record of costly and tedious sieges, resulting in little more than local advantages, it does not follow that this was his preference, that he was blind to the importance of pitched battles, or that he failed to rise above the strategical conceptions of his day. Condé among his forerunners, Frederick II. among those who came after him, stand out as the eagerest of seekers after battle.[2] Yet neither Condé nor Frederick were any more able to compel battle whenever they desired it than was Marlborough, and neither Frederick nor Condé had Dutch Deputies to hamper them or Slangenbergs and Opdams to execute their orders. Marlborough was not prone to enunciate principles or to lay down maxims, he must be judged by his practice in default of precepts, and his practice certainly shows that he went nearer than any of his contemporaries to realize that the destruction of the enemy's army is the chief object of a battle, and that gains of trophies and territories are of secondary importance in comparison with the reduction of the enemy's fighting power, a truth scarcely recognized at that day.[3] Moreover, as a rule it takes two to produce

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 11–13, 256 [2] *Cf* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 166.
[3] *Cf.* Bonnal, *De Rossbach à Ulm*, p. 12.

a battle, especially when armies are equally matched in strength, in mobility, and in manœuvring power. Whatever his enemies may have done, Marlborough never refused battle when offered a chance under reasonable conditions, while it would be hard to enumerate the occasions on which he was refused battle by his enemies or baulked of it by Dutch Deputies or generals.[1] Faced as he usually was by opponents of reputation and experience trained in a good school, Marlborough found it no easy task to bring Villars or Berwick to battle against their will. If he undertook many more sieges than he fought battles this was because he had convinced his enemies that it was well not to be brought to battle by him. When he was given a chance of battle he knew how to profit by it, when he had won his battles he knew how to turn them to advantage. His victories were not many but assuredly they were not barren.

But to the moral supremacy which his victories obtained for him Marlborough added the moral supremacy which comes from constantly misleading, mystifying, and surprising his enemies. He was a master of ruse and stratagem: he was always doing the unexpected and nowhere is his success in this respect more frankly acknowledged than in De la Colonie's account of Tirlemont. His admissions of the complete surprise of the French, who thought themselves amply secured against anything of the sort, testify to the impression the Duke made

[1] Such manœuvres as the forcing of the *non plus ultra* lines or the passage of the Scheldt when he relieved Brussels in 1708 are hard to bring into any category framed according to modern ideas. They were not "battles," but they achieved much that a battle might have given.

upon his enemies, Parker's account of Arleux to the confidence he had inspired in his men: they could not believe that the Duke was really at the end of his resources and the result confirmed them in their confidence. Parker writes that Villars was "so baffled and confounded that he knew not what to do against an adversary so vastly superior to him"; Kane, that "Villars not offering the least attempt to disturb our passing shows what a terror the Duke of Marlborough struck into France who were but the other day the bullies of all Europe."

Yet with all this Marlborough was not one to take undue liberties or to run unnecessary risks. "His temperament," it has been well said,[1] "was not even sanguine; he was wont to exaggerate rather than to underrate difficulties until he faced them." It is this which lends special weight to his daring proposal to advance straight into France after Oudenarde. It was not the light-hearted rashness of a Charles XII. or the spontaneous impulse of a Condé, it was the considered opinion of a man noted for his calmness and composedness. The same insight and penetration which on the battle-field made him quick to grasp the weaker points in an enemy's line, to see the tactical key to a position, showed him where the decisive blow might best be dealt and what course of action the enemy would find it hardest to parry. But just as Turenne had owed much of his success to his profound and careful reflection,[2] so Marlborough was wont to look before he leapt and to seek success not from sudden inspirations but from developing plans considered and matured in advance.

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1894. [2] Roy, p. 446.

An accomplished French critic[1] singled out Turenne for praise because he had shown that a campaign should be more than a mere series of battles and sieges without connected purpose, that by marches and manœuvres ends could be gained, battles brought on under favourable conditions and turned to good purpose. The same might well be said of Marlborough. He knew how to make use of his soldiers' legs, and in the forced march to Oudenarde and in that which allowed him to pass the *non plus ultra* lines, as in the more sustained efforts which took him to the Danube in 1704 and brought him back from the Moselle in 1705, he showed that he had learnt from Turenne all that that great master of the art of marching had to teach. And what is more he had trained his men to accomplish great things in marching and when he called on them for special efforts he did not call in vain.

Something has been said in describing the march to the Danube of Marlborough's solicitous care for his soldiers' well-being, the excellence of his administrative work, the forethought and imagination which anticipated and provided for their wants. The good results which Marlborough achieved out of a heterogeneous army are to be largely explained by this. It was not merely that his skill and success commanded their confidence, it was as Lediard says (Preface) that he "secured the affections of his soldiers by his good nature, his care for their provisions and vigilance not to expose them to unnecessary dangers." That he appealed to the better elements in his men appears from what follows. "His camps were like a well-governed

[1] La Barre Duparcq; *cf.* Roy, p. 449.

city and much more mannerly." Loose women, Lediard goes on, were chased away, Divine service was regularly performed, a high standard of discipline maintained. The results were satisfactory. The army was "beyond all consideration the best academy in the world to teach a young gentleman." "The poor soldiers who were, too many of them, the refuse and dregs of the nation became after one or two campaigns by the care of their officers and by good order and discipline tractable, civil, orderly, sensible and clean and had an air and a spirit above the vulgar." Lediard's picture bears traces of the conventional and does not quite tally with that drawn by Blackader, the Cameronian, to whom the bad language habitual in the army was most distressing, but there is plenty of evidence of unassailable character to testify to Marlborough's unremitting care of his men and to his fairness and honesty in administration. Blackader, in the intervals of wrestling with his conscience, supplies more than one instance. Of all the questions the Duke had to settle none gave rise to more difficulties and intrigues than those concerned with vacant regiments and other promotions. But Marlborough could resist aspirants with powerful friends behind them, could pass over his own aide-de-camp Macartney for an officer without influence, because the peculiar characteristics of the Cameronians made Borthwick of the Scots Brigade in the Dutch service better qualified for this particular vacancy.[1] It would be easy to multiply examples of Marlborough's personal interest in individual officers and regiments as of the excellent administrative work

[1] *Cf.* Portland MSS., iv., 265.

which not only kept the troops in good condition but made them ready to go anywhere and do anything for a commander who cared for them off the field and led them to victory upon it. It was at Marlborough's urging that clothing, a fertile source of abuses and shortcomings, was placed under the control of a board of General Officers.[1] It was under Marlborough that the abuses of the Pay Office were checked and the soldier made secure of his due, that the rules for the sale and purchase of commissions were systematized and modified.[2] No detail was too small to escape him. In 1705 he is found urging the use of smaller waggons by the bread contractors in order to suit the roads of the Rhineland and Moselle valley: in another letter he resists a proposal to purchase horses at Hamburg because he has "always been of opinion that English horses, as well as English men, are better than can be had anywhere else."[3] To say that Marlborough had to be his own Adjutant-General and Quarter-Master-General would hardly be an exaggeration, for while Cadogan held the post of Quarter-Master-General his duties were from the modern point of view rather those of the Chief of Staff. But certainly much of the work of the War Office at home also fell on the Duke's shoulders. His Dispatches are full of references to things from which a Commander-in-Chief in the field should be free, from the measures for re-raising the battalions which had been cut to pieces at Almanza,[4] to the necessity for obtaining an Act of Parliament to compel parishes and hundreds to produce recruits.[5]

[1] *Cf.* Fortescue, i., 573.
[2] *Ibid.*, i., 581.
[3] Disp., i., 544.
[4] *Ibid.*, iv., 79.
[5] *Ibid.*, iv., 335; *cf.* iii., 662.

Add to this the constant diplomatic missions, which he alone seemed able to conduct successfully, with his share in tackling the political problems which confronted his colleagues, and the quantity of work which he managed to discharge will be admitted to have been far beyond the normal capacity.

But after all it is not as an administrator, not as a disciplinarian, not as a diplomatist, nor even in strategy that Marlborough reached his highest level. As a tactician, as a leader of men on the battle-field, none of his contemporaries approached him. It was not only that he possessed that almost intuitive power of picking out his enemy's weak spots which had distinguished Condé, that he had an eye for ground as quick and acute as Wellington's, that—as at Oudenarde—he did not hesitate to manœuvre in broken ground which most of his contemporaries avoided as likely to produce disorder, that far from being dismayed by obstacles he showed—as at Ramillies—that he could turn them to account.[1] He fought his battles with a vigour and energy uncommon in his days. Seventeenth century commanders had been addicted to elaborate manœuvres even after contact had been gained—even Condé manœuvred for a full month in order to force his enemy to fight at Nordlingen. There was none of this about Marlborough. Once he had brought his enemy to book he attacked with all his might. There was no making partial attacks, no failure to utilize his whole force. He might keep back a reserve, but only to use it directly the course of the action showed where it could best be put in, At Ramillies as at Blenheim it was

[1] *Cf.* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 164.

largely by judicious use of his reserves that he achieved success and in both battles he to some extent created those reserves as the battle proceeded. At Blenheim by changing Cutts's assault on the village into a holding attack he provided himself with the troops wanted to sustain the action in the centre; at Ramillies he drew off from the right the extra weight needed to achieve victory on the left. In both battles he solved the problem of engaging the enemy all along the line and yet throwing a superior force on the decisive point.[1] Ramillies may be hailed as a brilliant example of the application to tactics of the principles of "economy of forces." Marlborough secured superiority at the decisive point without neglecting "sûreté": he ran no risks on the right, where Orkney's men could have held up a counter-attack, but though his enemies outnumbered him on the whole field, at the critical spot it was he who was in superior force. This concentration on one wing while the other is refused but yet utilized to "contain" part of the enemy's force, which is of the essence of his tactics at Ramillies, was the method on which he meant to fight Malplaquet, though there Orange's blunder prevented its proper application. It is really an anticipation in principle, if not in detail, of the famous "oblique order" of Frederick II. of Prussia.[2]

General Colin has said of Frederick II. that he got out of linear tactics all that that form could give, and that he combined in his decisive attack envelopment by

[1] *Cf.* Foch, *Les Principes de la Guerre*, p. 60.

[2] *Cf.* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 18, where he shows what the "oblique order" really was.

infantry, converging fire, and the cavalry charge.' The statement might have been made of Marlborough. Withers's attack at Malplaquet and the successive prolongation of his line at Oudenarde illustrate his employment of an outflanking movement, and in all his battles one has the combination of all three arms, of fire-effect and shock-tactics. His judicious handling of the artillery was conspicuous, especially at Blenheim and at Malplaquet; in all his battles infantry were used to support the cavalry, whose charges were still looked to for the decisive stroke. Linear tactics aimed at the greatest possible development of fire-effect,[1] and Marlborough certainly understood the necessity for the use of fire in frontal attacks. The cavalry were to deal the final blow, to break through the enemy and overwhelm him, but the way had to be paved for them by the fire of the infantry and artillery. Marlborough's infantry undoubtedly carried on the old tradition of good shooting which the archers of Crécy and Agincourt had handed down. Fire-discipline and fire-control were as distinctive marks of the men of Blenheim and Malplaquet as of their successors at Mons and Ypres. Millner relates how the Duke would put the whole army through its platoon exercise himself by signal of flag and drum: Kane, whose treatise on "*Discipline for a Regiment of Foot upon Action*" may be taken as embodying the traditions and ideas of Marlborough's army, is as insistent on the necessity of fire-discipline and fire-control as ever the *Musketry Regulations* and *Infantry Training* manuals of 1914. If infantry had not yet ousted cavalry from their pride of place, under

[1] *Cf.* Bonnal, *De Rossbach à Ulm.*

Marlborough they made great strides towards becoming the main element of an army's strength. The final disappearance of the pike, which occurred in 1706,[1] and the substitution for it of the musket and socket-bayonet marks the abolition of what had been the weak spot in the infantry, the inefficiency of the missile weapons at close-quarters, the helplessness outside the reach of their pikes of those who carried the close-quarter weapon.[2]

Marlborough—like Turenne—had served his apprenticeship in the infantry, but he had been a cavalryman too, and he was no less happy in handling the mounted arm than in his infantry and artillery tactics. British cavalry have seldom gained greater successes or a higher reputation than in Marlborough's wars. He had competent subordinates, notably Lumley and Lord John Hay and Wood, but his horsemen owed much of their success to the sound tactical principles which he inculcated. While the French cavalry many a time committed the fatal error of receiving a charge at the halt and trusting to their pistol fire from the saddle to check their enemy, Marlborough taught his mounted men that the sword was "the only weapon British horse make use of when they charge the enemy." Indeed Kane says that the Duke "would allow the horse but three charges of powder and ball to each man for a campaign and that only for guarding their horses when at grass and not be made use of in action."[3] Shock action for cavalry was the gospel that Marlborough preached and also practised with conspicuous success. Rupert had taught his Cavalier horsemen to rely on

[1] *Cf.* Fortescue, I., 586. [2] *Vide supra*, p. 18. [3] *Cf.* p 110.

shock-tactics, possibly because fire-arms were harder to come by than swords. The Ironsides had learnt from their opponents and had surpassed them. Under Marlborough a sound tradition was well maintained. Parker describes the decisive charge at Blenheim as delivered by advancing gently till close to the enemy and then going in at an increased speed. Yet it should be noticed that, finding that the French cavalry had benefited by the revival of pistol-proof armour, Marlborough insisted on having cuirasses issued to his horsemen and induced the Dutch to follow suit. Back-plates for sufficiently obvious reasons he did not revive.[1]

But while he accomplished much by the shock-tactics of his cavalry Marlborough's use of cavalry was based—as has been explained—on a thorough belief in the principle that if the cavalry charge achieves and completes the victory it is fire which produces it.[2] If he used cavalry as at Blenheim and at Malplaquet to deal the final blow he had always paved the way to the decisive stroke by judicious preparation with artillery and infantry fire. His handling of the three arms in combination carried on and improved upon the tradition started by Gustavus and continued by Condé and Turenne. If the conditions of the day did not permit any large proportion of artillery in the field few things are more noticeable in Marlborough's tactics than the very great importance he attached to the employment of such guns as he did possess. His careful selection of battery-positions, his use of the great battery at Malplaquet, the fact that the Allies had usually a higher pro-

[1] *Cf.* Disp., iii., pp. 309, 335, 461

[2] *Cf.* Colin, *Transformations*, p. 61.

portion[1] of guns to battalions and squadrons than the French, that this proportion was unusually high in the British contingent as the figures for Blenheim[2] show, all testify to the importance the Duke attached to artillery. Indeed it is significant that the formation of the Royal Regiment of Artillery on a definite and permanent footing (May, 1716) comes within Marlborough's period as Master General of the Ordnance, so that the Royal Regiment may be reckoned Marlborough's last legacy to the Army.

No feature of Marlborough's conduct on the battlefield impressed his officers and men more strongly than his calmness and serenity. Lediard says: "In the day of battle he gave his orders with all the clearness and composedness imaginable, leading on his troops without the least hurry or perturbation, and rallying those troops that were disordered without those harsh and severe reproaches which rather damp than animate the soldier's courage." This is very far from the: "Dogs, would you live for ever!" with which Frederick II. is reported to have hurled Manstein's ill-fated infantry into a precipitate and ill-judged attack on the Austrians at Kolin. And there was as little about Marlborough of the lapses into rashness and loss of control which so often brought Frederick to disaster as there was of Frederick's attitude to the "cannonenfutter" whom he commanded. This calm and com-

[1] The figures given by the different authorities vary enormously, and it is impossible to be certain which are correct, but Millner's figures for the strength of the opposing armies in the Netherlands at the beginning of the nine campaigns fought in that theatre (*i. e.*, excluding 1704) show a ratio of guns per thousand men of 1.16 for the Allies and 0.91 for the French.

[2] *Vide supra*, pp. 192, 196.

posure was one of Marlborough's greatest assets and contributed in no small degree to his ability to think clearly and decide quickly at critical moments. He kept his head, he was never ruffled, and so he did not miss the most fleeting opportunity to restore the fortunes of a failing day, to see and profit by his enemy's errors. But to the calm and level-headedness of Turenne Marlborough added the vigour and dash of Condé or Rupert. He had an energy wonderful in a man of his years and the pursuit after Ramillies is a clear proof of his realization of the truth that it is in pursuit that the fruits of victory are reaped. The disintegration and demoralization of the enemy which a hot pursuit produces has no better example. To have swept from one end to another a country so full of fortresses was as great an achievement as Napoleon's after Jena, while the critics who have condemned the pursuit after Blenheim as lacking in vigour are very hard to please. When the relics of Marsin and Tallard's armies reached the Rhine they were ruined enough for all practical purposes.

It is more than a mere coincidence that when Marlborough and Eugene undertook a siege the division of functions was nearly always the same. To the Prince was usually assigned the actual siege, to Marlborough the task of covering it. Eugene's dash and energy found plenty of outlets in the breach at Lille, Marlborough's cool-headed adaptation of means to ends, his resourcefulness, his almost uncanny capacity for divining his enemy's next move and consequently for parrying it before it could be delivered found equal scope in the work of the covering army. A great battle

like Ramillies or Oudenarde has more of the dramatic about it, it is easier to recognize a general's talents when they are so emphatically displayed, but Marlborough never accomplished anything more worthy of admiration than the skilful manœuvres which foiled all Berwick and Vendôme's efforts to disturb the siege of Lille. He chose his positions so judiciously and entrenched them so well that they never dared attack, though in superior force. Indeed in Marlborough's campaigns there is no example of a defensive battle. When he was free to act he attacked. When he was not free his enemies thought it best not to attack him, not even when, as so often in 1710 and 1711, he was tied down to some tedious and difficult siege. Experience dissuaded even Villars from the attempt.

In the more technical sphere of drill and evolutions there is no special innovation to be connected with Marlborough's name. To command an army drawn from several nationalities and many different states must have been a considerable handicap to new departures of this kind. To introduce changes into one army would have been simple, not so to get all the Allies to adopt them. In the final suppression of the pike France anticipated her enemies, but when in 1703 she took this step at Vauban's instance the proportion of pikemen in the English infantry was already so low as to suggest that there also the days of the pike were numbered. Marlborough, if he did not originate the dropping of the pike and the adoption as the universal weapon for infantry of the fire-lock or fusil fitted with the socket bayonet, must certainly have approved cordially of the change. His whole use of infantry

shows that he looked to their fire as their chief asset and the reduction of the ranks in which infantry were formed to four or even three was a step in the same direction, as it allowed an increased volume of fire. This again there is no evidence for attributing specifically to him but it must have commended itself to him. He would not have sympathized with those French officers who disregarded fire effect, believed in mere shock-tactics for infantry and would even have restored the pike to its old place. Maurice de Saxe was among these reactionaries but it is not through Saxe that Marlborough's tradition was transmitted. In Marlborough's army at Blenheim and again at Malplaquet there fought that Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau who as "the Old Dessauer" was one of the chief makers of the Prussian infantry. Thirty years after Malplaquet that infantry astonished the world by its victory at Mollwitz won solely by fire-discipline and fire-control. If the "Old Dessauer" laid no small part of the foundations for the successes of Prussia under Frederick II. it was from Marlborough that he had learnt, just as the Duke had learnt from Turenne. Except the more highly developed and more flexible drill and the consequent increase in manœuvring power there is little in Frederick's tactics that is not to be found in Marlborough's. At Tirlemont and at Oudenarde he certainly anticipated Frederick's use of mixed advance-guards of all arms intended to fight directly they met the enemy. And once more, if Frederick systematized, elaborated, and established the method, the germ of "oblique order" and of the great attack at Leuthen may be found fifty years earlier at Ramillies.

Marlborough's place amongst great soldiers must always be in the fore-front. He ranks with Gustavus and Turenne and Frederick among the predecessors of Napoleon and of that new era in warfare which the wars of the French Revolution ushered in. In the history of the British Army he has a place of peculiar importance. Before his day British soldiers had won victories abroad as well as at home. An Englishman, Henry V., carried the art of war to the highest level it reached in the days before fire-arms became a principal factor in war. But the British Army, which in conjunction with the British Navy has made and extended and defended and saved the British Empire, was a thing of but little reputation or standing before the days of John Churchill. It was unpopular and suspected at home. It was little feared or regarded abroad. Under Marlborough it did not altogether live down the atmosphere of suspicion with which politicians and plotters had managed to surround it, though the popular dread of the Army was based not on what it had done but on what James II. had failed to make it do. But it did effectively dispel any misapprehensions as to its fighting capacities which the Continent may have entertained. The British cavalry, the British artillery, and the British infantry were one and all second to none in Europe. The best troops of Louis XIV., Maison du Roi, Swiss Guards, French Guards, even the "Wild Geese" themselves, had gone down before them. When Marlborough proclaimed himself of opinion that "English men are better than what can be had anywhere else," he could give chapter and verse for his claim. The regiments who fought under Marlborough have been but scantily rewarded

in "battle honours" for their part in establishing the reputation of the British Army and its regiments on a solid and enduring basis. There have been times when Frenchmen have been glad that there was so little of the British infantry, which one of their Marshals had admitted to be the best in the world. There have been times when Frenchmen have had reason to wish there were more of the British infantry. But at all times the standards and traditions of achievement and endurance which John Churchill and his men set to their successors have been standards worth reaching and only to be reached by strenuous endeavour. Blenheim and Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet, the Schellenberg and Lille, Menin and Tournai, and many another desperate if half-forgotten siege set the start of a great tradition at a high level. And the man who did more than any other to establish the military reputation of the British Army was Churchill himself. It is only necessary to compare Europe when he started his ten campaigns with Europe at the end of them to realize his work. Europe has been threatened since 1702 with dangers besides which the predominance of a Louis XIV. seems but a trifle. To the Europe of the beginning of the eighteenth century Louis was quite sufficiently alarming. That his ambitions were defeated was largely Marlborough's doing. Marlborough was admittedly a great general. According to the standards of his time he was in many respects a good man. The charges of peculation so lavishly raised against him by his enemies are incapable of proof. But there are grievous blots on his record. That they are no worse than those which stain the record of all his contemporaries is a very par-

tial defence His only defence lies in his whole work. Bolingbroke is reported to have said of Marlborough: "He was so great a man that I forget his errors." Bolingbroke had reason enough to set a liberal standard. Marlborough's work in defeating the schemes of Louis XIV., in extending the British Empire, in making the British Army, may justify the reply to his critics that: "John, Duke of Marlborough, did at the same time render great services to his country."

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